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PLAYS OF OSCAR WILDE

GRAND VALLEY STATE COLLEGES

THE GIFT OF

Robert L. Chamberlain

WITHDRAWN

THE PLAYS OF OSCAR WILDE

VOLUME III

1907
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THE DUCHESS OF PADUA

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Dramatis Personae

SIMONE GESSO (Duke of Padua).
BEATRICE (his Wife).
ANDREA POLLAIUOLO (Cardinal of Padua).
MAFFIO PETRUCCI, JEPPO VITELOZZO, TADDEO BARDI } (of the Ducal Household).
GUIDO FERRANTI.
ASCANIO CRISTOFANO (his Friend).
COUNT MORANZONE.
BERNARDO CAVALCANTI (Chief Justiciar of Padua).
HUGO (the Public Executioner).
LUCIA (a Tirewoman).

Serving-Men, Burghers, Soldiers, Falconers, Monks, etc.

Scene — Padua

Time — Latter half of the sixteenth century.

Act I. Market place at Padua.
Act II. Room in the Ducal Palace.
Act III. Corridor in the Ducal Palace.
Act IV. Hall of Justice.
Act V. Prison.

FIRST ACT

ACT I

Market-Place at Padua, Noon

In the background the Cathedral, a building of black and white marble in the Romanesque style. Marble steps lead up to the Great Door; at foot of these two massive stone lions. Houses on either side, with bright-coloured awnings at the windows, and stone arcades along the front. To right a fountain, — a Triton in antique bronze, blowing his conch at the entrance of his cave. Round the basin runs a stone bench. The Cathedral bells are ringing, and the citizens, men and women and children, are flocking into Church.

GUIDO FERRANTI *and* ASCANIO CRISTOFANO

ASCANIO. Sure as I'm a man with the breath o' life in me, I'll not budge a step further; else shall I have no breath left, — to curse withal. 'Od's malison on this jack o'lantern dance, say I! [*Sits down on the stone bench.*]

GUIDO. Nay, lad! it must be here. [*Accosts a passer-by, doffing his cap.*] Pardon me, Sir, is this the Market-Place, and yonder the Church of Santa Croce? [*Citizen nods.*] Thanks, good Sir.

ASCINDO. Well?

GUIDO. Yea! this is the spot.

ASCANIO. I' faith, I would 'twere any other; there's never a tavern in sight.

GUIDO. [*Takes a letter from his pocket and reads*]. "Time — noon; town — Padua; place — the Market square; day — St. Philip's."

ASCANIO. And the man? How says it we are to know *him?*

GUIDO [*Reads*]. "I shall wear a violet cloak, with a silver falcon embroidered on the shoulder," — gay apparel, Ascanio!

ASCANIO. I'd liefer have my leathern jerkin. And dost think he will give thee tidings of thy father?

GUIDO. Surely. Dost not remember? 'tis scarce a week agone, I was in the vineyard, at the corner by the high-road, just where the goats aye break in, when a man came riding by who asked me if my name was Guido. Then he gave me this letter signed "Thy father's Friend," bidding me come hither to-day, if I would learn the secret of my birth. I have alway deemed old Pietro my uncle, but the letter said 'twas not so, — that I had but been entrusted to his charge by one whom he had never seen again.

ASCANIO. Dost not know then who thy father was?

GUIDO. No.

ASCANIO. Hast no recollection at all of him?

GUIDO. None, Ascanio, none.

ASCANIO [*Laughing*]. Ah! then he can never have fetched thee so many a shrewd clout o' the head as mine did me!

GUIDO [*Smiling*]. Didst never deserve 'em of course, dear lad!

ASCANIO. Never! that was just the sin and shame o't. Not once did conscience round me I was guilty, never once! — What hour did he appoint?

GUIDO. Noon. [*Cathedral clock strikes.*]

ASCANIO. 'Tis that now, and our man is not here. I don't believe in him, Guido: I misdoubt 'tis some wench hath cast soft eyes on thee. I have companied thee from Perugia to Padua, — now, o' my life, thou shalt company me to the nearest tavern. [*Rises.*] By the great gods of appetite, Guido, I'm as sharp-set for meat as a widow for a husband, as weary of walking as a maid of moralizing,

and as dry as a sermon. Come, Guido! why stand there a-gape at nothing, like the village idiot, would peep into his own pate! Thy man is not coming.

GUIDO. I fear thou'rt i' the right. Ha! [*Just as he is preparing to go off with* ASCANIO, COUNT MORANZONE *appears in a violet cloak having a silver falcon embroidered on the shoulder. He goes up stage to the Cathedral; as he is on the point of entering the church,* GUIDO *springs up the steps and intercepts him.*]

MORANZONE. Guido Ferranti, thou art well true to time.

GUIDO. Then my father lives?

MORANZONE. Yea, he lives — in thee. Dost favour him in features, bearing, gait and all outward semblance; I pray thou be his match in mind and mettle.

GUIDO. Tell me of my father! For this moment only have I lived.

MORANZONE. We should be alone.

GUIDO. This is my trustiest friend, who for the love he bears me hath come with me to Padua; there is no secret we share not as brothers.

MORANZONE. *One* secret thou must not confide to him.

GUIDO [*To* ASCANIO]. Return in an hour's time. He knows not there is naught in this world can dim the flawless mirror of our love. For one hour farewell!

ASCANIO. Talk not with him, he hath the evil eye.

GUIDO [*Laughing*]. No, no, I have no doubt he will tell me I am a great lord in Italy, and long and merry days await us. Leave us for an hour, dear lad! [*Exit* ASCANIO.] Now tell me of my father. [*Sits down on the stone bench.*] Was he tall? This at any rate I know for sure, he sat his horse right gallantly. His hair was dark? — mayhap a red gold, like the glint of fire? Was his voice soft and low? Doughty warriors sometimes have a gentle ring of voice. Or was it like the battle clarion

that shatters the foemen's array? Rode he alone to war, or with a brave company of squires and valorous riders? Nay! I feel oft as if the blood of Kings pulsed through my veins. Was he a King?

MORANZONE. He was the kingliest of men.

GUIDO [*Proudly*]. So, when last you saw him, my noble father towered high above the rest.

MORANZONE. High above others' heads — [*Going up to* GUIDO *and laying a hand on his shoulder*] there on the scaffold, where the headsman's axe lay ready for his neck.

GUIDO [*Starting back*]. Who art thou, dreadful man, who like a raven, with its ghostly cry, comest from the grave to bring this hapless news?

MORANZONE. Men call me here the Count Moranzone, Lord of a poor mountain hold, a few starveling acres and a scanty crew of henchmen. Yet was I once a Noble of Parma's noblest, — nay! more than that, I was thy father's friend.

GUIDO [*Seizing the* COUNT'S *hand*]. Tell me of him.

MORANZONE. Thou art Lorenzo's son, the great Duke, whose banner waved o'er many a hard-fought field, in battle with the Saracen infidels. He was Prince of Parma and Duke of all the fair realm of Lombardy up to the walls of Florence; yea! Florence itself was tributary to him.

GUIDO. Come to his death.

MORANZONE. Thou'lt hear that soon enough! He was at war, — oh! noble warrior-lion that in all Italy would never suffer wrong to be, — he led the fine flower of chivalry against the Lord of Rimini, that foul adulterer Giovanni Malatesta — whom God requite — and was lured by him into a traitorous ambush, bound in caitiff fetters and like a low-lived rascal, like a baseborn knave, butchered by the common headsman before all men's eyes.

GUIDO [*Grasping his dagger*]. And Malatesta lives?

MORANZONE. No, he is dead.

GUIDO. Dead, you say? Oh! over-hasty Death, hadst but tarried a short while for me, I would have done thine office for thee.

MORANZONE [*Clasping the young man's wrist*]. 'Tis not too late! The man who sold him is yet alive.

GUIDO. Sold him? my father was sold?

MORANZONE. Yea! sold like a head of bestial; bartered and betrayed for pelf, higgled and chaffered for in secret bargain, by one he thought the paragon of freres, — his bosom friend in whom he trusted, whose love he had knitted to himself by countless benefits. Who on this earth sows kindness reaps only base ingratitude.

GUIDO. So thou'rt alive, false Judas? Well, I will make the wide world thy Potter's field, — go, buy it forthwith, for verily thou must hang there.

MORANZONE. *Judas*, thou saidst? Yea! Judas in his unfaith, but he was craftier than Judas was; thirty pieces of silver *he* deemed too scant a price.

GUIDO. And what gat he for my father's head?

MORANZONE. What gat he? Why, cities, fiefs and principalities, — vineyards and broad lands.

GUIDO. Whereof he shall keep but six poor feet of soil, to rot in. Where is he, the accursed villain, tell me where? Show me the fellow, and though he come steel clad from head to foot, armoured and mailed in panoply, yea! guarded by a thousand horsemen, — yet will I pierce the bulwark of their spears and see his black heart's blood distil its latest drop from off my blade. I will kill him.

MORANZONE [*Speaking deliberately*]. Fool, dost call that revenge? Death is the final lot of all us mortals, and if he come suddenly, why, then 'tis so much gained! [*Goes close up to* GUIDO.] Thy father was sold, sold, — be that thy cue; sell thou the seller in thy turn! Thou must to Court, sit at the same board with him, eat of the same bread.

GUIDO. Ah, bitter bread!

MORANZONE. Thy palate is too nice; vengeance will sweeten the taste. O' nights thou must be his boon-companion at the revel, his closest friend, that he may cling confidingly to thee and tell thee all his wiles. Laugh, if he asks thy merriment; runs his humour to melancholy, don mourning weeds! When the time is ripe — [GUIDO *grasps his sword*]. No, no, I cannot trust thee; thy hot-blooded youth and unbridled temper will not wait for this slow satisfaction, but will shipwreck our schemes of vengeance.

GUIDO. You know me not. Tell me his name, and I will follow your counsel in all ways.

MORANZONE. When the time is fully come, the victim lulled asleep, the hour favourable, I will send thee secretly a sign by a speedy messenger.

GUIDO. Speak, how is the man to die?

MORANZONE. That night thou must clamber to his sleeping room, — note it well!

GUIDO. Nay, have no fear.

MORANZONE. I know not if crime-laden folk do sleep; but if he sleeps, then wake him first, and grip him by the throat — so, dost understand? Tell him of what blood thou art, of whose begetting, and the motive of thy vengeance; then let him cringe to thee, cringe on his bended knees. Let him proffer thee his hoarded treasures for his life, and when he sacrifices all his fortune, say this: 'I want not gold, mercy I know not,' — and straightway to thy task. Now swear, thou wilt not slay him ere I give the word; else I return home again and leave thee yet in ignorance and thy father unavenged.

GUIDO. I swear by my father's battle-flag —

MORANZONE. The headsman tore it to tatters in the open Market-square.

GUIDO. By my father's grave then —

MORANZONE. Grave! What grave? Thy gallant father hath no grave. His dust was scattered to the winds, his ashes borne by the breeze about the streets like chaff that pricks the eyes of beggarmen. His head was spiked before the gaol, tricked out in mockery with a paper crown, that the scurrilous rabble of the town might whet their ribald tongues at his expense.

GUIDO. Was all this so? Then by my father's spotless name, by his shameful, hideous death, by his friend's abject villainy, — these things at least remain, — by these I swear I will not assail his life until you bid me, — *then* God help his soul; he shall die, die worse than a dog's death! And now, the sign?

MORANZONE. This dagger, thy father's dagger, boy.

GUIDO. Oh! let me see it close. Ah! now I remember me how my so-called uncle, good old man, spake of a cloak, — as a babe I was wrapped in it, — whereon were woven in gold two leopards such as these; in steel as here they like me better, — they're fitter for my purpose. Speak, Sir, have you no word to give me from my father?

MORANZONE. Thou never saw'st thy father — After his false friend had bewrayed him, I only escaped of all his liegemen to carry the fatal news to Parma to the Duchess.

GUIDO. Tell me of my mother.

MORANZONE. Thy mother — she was a very Saint of purity — fell into a swoon at the tidings, was seized with pangs of childbirth 'fore the time — she had been wed but seven short months — and brought thee prematurely into the world. Then fled her soul heavenward, to welcome thy father at the gate of Paradise.

GUIDO. The mother dead, the father bought and sold! Meseems as though I stood upon a beleaguered rampart, and messenger after messenger came to bring me Job's tidings. Prithee, let me get my breath; my ears are dinned with ill news.

MORANZONE. When thy mother died, in fear of foes I spread the report that thou too wast dead; then I spirited thee away, and carried thee to a trusty vassal, who dwells at Perugia; thou know'st the rest.

GUIDO. Saw you ever my father again?

MORANZONE. Yea, once; clad in the mean garb of a vinedresser, I crept to Rimini.

GUIDO. Oh noble heart!

MORANZONE. At Rimini everything is to be had for gold — I bribed his gaolers. When thy father learned that a son was born to him, his eye flashed clear beneath his brows, like distant lightning on the main. He gripped my hand, and made me swear to rear thee worthily of him, — and I took the oath. Do thou revenge his death on the false friend!

GUIDO. For my dead father's sake, I thank thee. . . . Now his name?

MORANZONE. How thou remind'st me of him! in every lineament thou'rt his fellow.

GUIDO. The villain's name!

MORANZONE. Thou'lt learn it soon; the Duke is e'en now on his way hither, with his Court.

GUIDO. What of that? Tell me his name!

MORANZONE. Think'st not they make a gallant band of worshipful and stalwart gentlemen?

GUIDO. The name, Count!

[*The* DUKE OF PADUA *enters, attended by* COUNT BARDI, MAFFIO PETRUCCI, *and other noblemen of his Court.*]

MORANZONE [*Quickly*]. The man to whom I kneel is thy father's murderer. Mark him!

GUIDO [*Reaching for the dagger*]. The Duke!

MORANZONE. Keep thy fingers from the steel. What, dost forget so soon? — [*Kneels to the* DUKE.] My noble Lord!

DUKE. Greeting to ye, Moranzone; 'tis long since we

have seen you at Padua. We were hunting yesterday around your Castle — you call it a Castle, yon chilly house wherein you sit mumbling o'er your beads, a-making your confession like a good old man. I am never like to be a good old man; God would be outwearied with the confession of my sins! [*Sees* GUIDO, *and draws back.*] Who is that yonder?

MORANZONE. My sister's son, your Grace! just come of age for bearing arms; he would fain tarry a while at Court.

DUKE [*Still gazing at* GUIDO]. How is he called?

MORANZONE. Guido Ferranti, my Lord!

DUKE. Of what city?

MORANZONE. He springs from Mantua.

DUKE [*Approaching* GUIDO]. Thou hast the eyes of one I knew, — but he died childless. Thou would'st serve with me? well, we lack soldiers. — Art hònest, sirrah? Then make no truck with thine honesty, keep it for thyself. At Padua honesty is deemed ostentation; so 'tis clean out o' fashion there. Look, see these lords, they smell of amber and perfumes. . . .

BARDI [*Aside*]. For sure the poisoned shaft is aimed at us.

DUKE. Every man thou see'st hath his price; albeit — to pose as incorruptible — some set it high.

BARDI. I thought as much.

DUKE. So give up honesty. Singularity is no profitable quality, albeit in these stale, flat, insipid days, the very most singular thing a man can do is to have wits, for then the rabble jeers him. The rabble! scorn thou it as I do. Its praise is froth, and I count its windy favour accordingly. Popularity is the one insult I have never had to abide.

MAFFIO [*Aside*]. He hath had no lack of hate, an that be what he craves.

DUKE. Be crafty; in thy dealings with the world, curb

thine impetuousness! Think twice! The first impulse is oftenest good-natured.

GUIDO [*Aside*]. On his lips sits a toad that distils its venom thence.

DUKE. Give heed to foes, else will the world think light of thee; 'tis in its eyes a proof of power. Yet show a smiling mask of friendship to every man, till what time thou hast him safe in hand. Then crush him!

GUIDO [*Aside*]. Oh wise Philosopher! Art digging a deep grave for thine own self.

MORANZONE [*To* GUIDO]. Dost mark his words?

GUIDO. Yea, only too well!

DUKE. And never be over scrupulous; the hand that is clean is empty, and offers a pitiful show. Would'st have the lion's share in life's good things, why, don the fox's skin; it will bestead thee well. 'Tis a coat that fits every man, fat and lean, great and small; who makes thee such a coat, is a tailor will never lack for customers.

GUIDO. Your Grace, I will remember.

DUKE. Good, my lad, good! I care not to have about me shallow fools, that mete out the gold of life with niggling scruples, and shifting, shuffling, come to shipwreck; failure is the one fault I never know. Let me have men about me. Conscience is but a name that dastard cowardice scrawls on the shield. Dost understand me, sirrah?

GUIDO. Yea, your Grace; in all ways will I obey your golden rule.

MAFFIO. Never have I seen your Grace so much inclined for preaching; the Cardinal must have an eye to his laurels.

DUKE. *My* gospel is practised by the world, his only talked about. I think little of the Cardinal; he must needs be a pious churchman that will deny his tediousness. Well, young sir, we number thee to-day amongst our Household. [*Reaches* GUIDO *his hand to kiss.* GUIDO

starts back in horror, but at a warning gesture from COUNT MORANZONE, *kneels and kisses the* DUKE'S *hand.*] Henceforward thou must be accoutred as beseems our Court and thine own honour.

GUIDO. From my heart I thank your Grace.

DUKE. Tell me again; what was your name?

GUIDO. Guido Ferranti, my Lord.

DUKE. From Mantua? Have a care for your wives, when so trim a gallant comes to Padua. Yea, you do well to laugh, Count Bardi, I know right well how merry-hearted is the man at whose hearth sits an uncomely wife.

MAFFIO. By leave, your Grace, the dames of Padua are above suspicion.

DUKE. What, are all foul-featured? Come, the Cardinal hath long been waiting our pious consort; why, folk should clip him both his sermon and his beard. Will you with us, Count, and help us hear a homily of good St. Jerome.

MORANZONE [*Bowing*]. Alas, my Lord. . . .

DUKE [*Interrupting*]. Spare your excuses; you would as lief miss the Mass. Now follow all.

[*Disappears with his train into the Cathedral.*]

GUIDO [*After a pause*]. My father was the Duke's victim, and I kissed his hand!

MORANZONE. Oft do it in the future!

GUIDO. Must I?

MORANZONE. Yea! thou hast sworn an oath.

GUIDO. My oath doth make me hard as granite.

MORANZONE. Farewell, my son; thou see'st me no more till the time is ripe.

GUIDO. I implore you, come soon.

MORANZONE. I will be to hand, when the time is ripe; be ready!

GUIDO. Have no fear.

MORANZONE. Yonder comes thy friend. Banish him from Padua, and from thy heart.

GUIDO. Yea, from Padua; from my heart, no.

MORANZONE. Nay, it must needs be. I will not leave thee, till thou hast done it.

GUIDO. Do you grudge me every friend?

MORANZONE. Revenge be thy friend, thou need'st no other.

GUIDO. Well, well, so be it!

ASCANIO [ASCANIO CRISTOFANO *enters*]. Guido, lad, I have outdone thee every way. I have drunk a flask of wine, eaten a pasty and kissed the serving-wench. Thou look'st as down i' the mouth as a schoolboy that cannot buy him apples, or a potwalloper that cannot sell his vote. What is the news, Guido?

GUIDO. Ascanio, we two must part.

ASCANIO. That may be something new, but 'tis not true.

GUIDO. Too true, Ascanio; thou must now begone, and should'st never see my face again.

ASCANIO. No, no; thou dost not know me really, Guido mine. I am but a lowly farmer's son, ill practised in the use of courtly manners; so I can still, an thou art of noble lineage, be thy henchman. I will guard thee truer than an hireling doth.

GUIDO [*Seizing his hand*]. Ascanio! [*Sees* MORANZONE'S *menacing look and drops* ASCANIO'S *hand.*] It cannot be.

ASCANIO. Hath it come to this with thee? Why, methought the friendship of the antique world was not yet dead, that the Roman exemplar might in our flat, stale and unheroic days yet find its worthy counterpart. By the love that sleeps peaceful as the summer seas, what fortune hath betid thee? May I share it?

GUIDO. Share it?

ASCANIO. Yea, share it.

GUIDO. Never, never.

ASCANIO. Hath an heritage come to thee, — a Castle with strong towers, and gold to boot?

GUIDO [*Bitterly*]. Yea, I have entered on mine heritage. Oh, bloody legacy, horrid heirship! Verily must I guard it anxiously like any miser, and keep all for myself! Wherefore, I prithee, leave me now.

ASCANIO. What, must we never more sit hand in hand, as once we used, buried so deep in an old tome of chivalry that curly head touched curly head? must we never more play truant, and away to follow the huntsman through the Autumn woods, and watch the falcons shake off their jesses, as puss breaks from the covert?

GUIDO. Never more.

ASCANIO. Must I leave thee then without one fond word?

GUIDO. Leave me, and my love go with thee.

ASCANIO. Unknightly, churlish thy behaviour!

GUIDO. Unknightly, churlish — yea, an thou wilt. . . . Why waste more useless words? Fare thee well!

ASCANIO. Hast thou no word of kindly parting, Guido?

GUIDO. No. The past all lies behind me like a dream. To-day a new life begins. Farewell!

ASCANIO. Farewell! [*Exit slowly and reluctantly.*]

GUIDO. Well, are you content? Saw you not how I drave from me my friend and staunchest comrade, as he were a kitchen scullion? Oh, to think I could treat him so! — Are you now content?

MORANZONE. I am content. But now my way is back to my desert fortalice in the hills. Forget not the token, — thy father's dagger. Whenas I send it thee, fulfil thy task!

GUIDO. Be sure I will. [*Exit* COUNT MORANZONE.] Oh, Everliving God, should my soul yet retain some trace

of human nature, — kindly ruth or soft sympathy, — wither, consume, destroy it! An Thou dost not, I must myself cut compassion with cold steel from out my heart, I must smother pity in my sleep o' nights, that it speak not within me. Revenge for me! Revenge, be thou my bedfellow, my bosom friend, sit thou by me, ride with me to the chase; if I am a-weary, sing me sweet songs, if I am light-hearted, make merry with me, and if I dream, whisper in mine ear the hideous story of my father's murder — Said I murder? [*Draws his dagger.*] Then hear me, God of Vengeance! Oh God, Thou God which punishest all perjury, may Thine angels record this my solemn oath in flames of fire, that till the day I expiate my father's death with blood, I will forego the noble ties of honourable friendship, the noble joys of comradeship, the union of loving souls and heartfelt gratitude, — yea more, from this hour forth I do foreswear the love of women and that hollow bauble men call female loveliness — [*The organ peals out in the Cathedral. Beneath a canopy of cloth of silver borne by four pages in scarlet, the* DUCHESS OF PADUA *descends the Church steps; as she passes* GUIDO, *their eyes meet for an instant, and as she leaves the stage, she turns to look back at the young man, whose dagger drops from his hand.*] Say, who is yonder lady?

BURGHER. The Duchess of Padua!

END OF ACT I

SECOND ACT

ACT II

A State Apartment in the Duke's Castle

The walls are hung with tapestry representing the festal procession of Venus and the Graces. A wide central door leads onto a loggia with pillars of red marble, affording a view over Padua. To right, a great canopy, with three thrones, on being higher than the others. The ceiling is decorated with long gilt rays to imitate sunbeams. Furniture of the period, — seats covered in gilt and embossed leather, buffets set out with gold and silver plate, and chests painted with mythological scenes. A throng of Courtiers stands outside on the loggia, looking into the street below, from which ascends the roaring of a disorderly rabble, and shouts of 'Down with the DUKE.' *After a short pause, enter the* DUKE, *very calm. He leans on* FERRANTI'S *arm, and is accompanied by the* CARDINAL. *The outcries continue unabated.*

DUKE. No, Cardinal, I have had full enough of her; she is worse than wicked, — good.

MATTIO [*Excitedly*]. Two thousand folk, Highness, are come together, clamouring more insolently every moment.

DUKE. Pshaw! they but offend their lungs! Who brawls so loud, my lords, will do us no hurt; the only foes I fear are the silent ones. [*Howls from the crowd.*] Look you, Cardinal, how my people loves me; they offer me a serenade, I had liefer hear it than any soft complaining of the lute. Is't not ecstasy to hearken to it? [*Renewed outcry.*] Alas! they be a trifle out of tune; therefore must my men shoot at them. A cats' concert I cannot brook.

Petrucci, go tell the Captain of our Guard below to clear the Square. Art hard o' hearing? Do what I wish.

[*Exit* PETRUCCI.]

CARDINAL. I do beseech your Grace, give ear to their distress.

DUKE [*Seating himself on the throne*]. Why yes, the pears all this year have never been so fine as of yore. I pray you pardon, Cardinal, I thought you spake of pears. [*A shout of joy from the populace.*] What means that?

GUIDO [*Rushes to the window*]. The Duchess is below in the Square, — pacing betwixt the soldiers and the folk, to stay the firing.

DUKE. The Foul Fiend have her!

GUIDO [*Still at the window*]. Now hath she entered the Palace, — a dozen burghers after her.

DUKE [*Springing up*]. The Duchess, by Heaven! she doth presume too far.

BARDI. She is here.

DUKE. Shut yonder door; the morning air strikes cold. [*The door onto the loggia henceforth remains closed. — The* DUCHESS *enters, followed by a band of shabbily clad burghers.*]

BEATRICE [*Falling on her knees*]. I do beseech your Grace; hear our petition.

DUKE. Am I a tailor, lady wife, that you appear before me with so ragged a crew?

BEATRICE. Their rags make manifest, methought, their distress more clearer than I can myself.

DUKE. Wherein standeth their distress?

BEATRICE. Ah, my good lord, day by day they do endure such dole as neither you nor I nor ever a one of all these noble lords have ever used to have the faintest thought of. Why, the very bread they eat is baked of half rotten husks.

FIRST BURGHER. Yea, nothing but husks.

DUKE. A fine nourishing food; I give it my own nags.

BEATRICE [*Persisting*]. And the water that flows into the town cisterns is corrupted by the breach of the aqueduct to foul swamps and miry pools.

DUKE. Drink wine; water is most unwholesome.

SECOND BURGHER. Ah, but, your Grace, the tolls are grown so high that be levied at the city gate that wine is not for us.

DUKE. Then commend the tolls, seeing they keep you sober.

BEATRICE. Think how we flaunt in pomp and splendour here, and lack naught that luxury and wealth can crave, with hosts of servants to obey our every nod. Whiles through *their* sunless lanes slinks haggard misery, and with sharp knife stealthily and noiselessly slits the little children's throats.

THIRD BURGHER. Yea verily, so 'tis; my pretty lad died yesterday of hunger. He was six years old; I am so poor I cannot bury him.

DUKE. Art poor? then dost not feel happy to say as much? Why, poverty is a Christian virtue; [*To the* CARDINAL] is't not so? You, Cardinal, I know have fat livings, tythes and lands, — that make you ready enow to preach voluntary poverty.

BEATRICE. My noble Duke, my husband, be pitiful! Whiles we sit here in proud palaces with pillared porticoes to guard us from the sun, with walls and roofs to keep out the winter's cold, there's many a burgher here in Padua lives in so vile a hole that rain and snow and blustering wind are fellow lodgers with him. Others sleep of autumn nights under the arches of the city bridges, till the damp mists stiffen their limbs, and fever comes, and then —

DUKE. — they are safe hid in Abraham's bosom. Them that be so wretched here below, I send 'em up to Heaven. And do they ever thank me for't? [*To the*

CARDINAL.] Stands it not somewhere set down in Holy Writ, that every man should be content with that state of life God sends him? Why must I meddle therewith, and botch the handiwork of all-wise Providence? It hath decreed that some men starve, whiles others feast. The world is none of my making.

FIRST BURGHER. The Duke hath a hard heart.

SECOND BURGHER. Hist, neighbour, I hope the Cardinal is going to speak for us.

CARDINAL. Verily 'tis a Christian duty to bear poverty, for God doth appoint a rich reward thereto; yet is it no less Christian to be charitable, to still hunger and heal pain. Meseems here in our city are many wrongs Your Highness' wisdom should reform.

FIRST BURGHER. What is this 'reform'! What means it, eh?

SECOND BURGHER. 'Faith! it means this, to let all be as 'tis. I would have somewhat else.

DUKE. Reform! you, Cardinal, spake of reform? In Germany lives a man called Luther, who would fain reform your Roman Church. Well, have ye not proclaimed him heretic, and hang not the Church's ban and interdict over his head?

CARDINAL [*Starting up*]. He hath lured the flock from out the fold, — all we ask is that *you* feed the sheep.

DUKE. I have shorn their fleece, so I may well feed them. .But the rebels — [*The* DUCHESS *raises appealing hands*].

FIRST BURGHER. Hist! a word of pity, he will grant us some boon.

SECOND BURGHER. Dost think so?

DUKE. For this ragged rabble that comes here before me, — their mouths are swollen with treason —

THIRD BURGHER. Softly, my noble Duke; then stop 'em with bread. We will be quiet enow then.

DUKE. Nay, but ye shall keep quiet, hungry or full. My lords, so mutinous have grown the times, the yokel scarce lifts his hat and fears no blows, while the day labourer hustles the noble in the open street. Now God hath appointed me for scourge to this rout, to chastise them for their sins.

BEATRICE. By what right? Art *thou* so sinless?

DUKE. If virtue punish sin, 'tis naught; but let sin chasten sin; then is God well pleased.

BEATRICE. Have you no awe of Heaven?

DUKE. Have I aught to fear? Man's enemy, am I not God's friend? [*To the* BURGHERS.] Now, my good, trusty men of Padua, anent the petition of the Duchess, — to deny a boon to so fair an advocate, were to lack love and courtesy, — I promise this, to do something for your distress —

FIRST BURGHER. Now is he going to abolish the tolls!

SECOND BURGHER. Or have them give us each a loaf of bread!

DUKE. Next Sunday shall the Cardinal choose for his sermon after the blessed Mass the text: 'how beautiful a thing it is to be obedient!' [*Murmurs from the* BURGHERS.]

FIRST BURGHER. That will not fill our bellies.

SECOND BURGHER. A sermon is but a poor sauce, an a man have nothing more.

BEATRICE. Poor folk, ye see I have no weight with the Duke; but get you to the Castle yard, and my treasurer shall share amongst you an hundred ducats from my chest, albeit gold is not alway over plentiful therein.

ALMONER. An hundred ducats is the whole sum it holds.

BEATRICE. Give them what I have.

FIRST BURGHER. God keep the Duchess!

SECOND BURGHER. God keep her Grace!

BEATRICE. And every Monday morn bread shall be given to them in need. [*The* BURGHERS *bow themselves out.*]

FIRST BURGHER [*As he goes*]. God keep the Duchess, say I again.

DUKE [*Calling him back*]. Come hither, fellow! What is thy name?

FIRST BURGHER. Dominic, my Lord.

DUKE. A fine name! Prithee, why Dominic, and no other?

FIRST BURGHER [*Scratching his head*]. Because that I was born on St. George's day.

DUKE. An excellent good reason! Here's a ducat for thee; now shout likewise, — God keep the Duke!

FIRST BURGHER [*Feebly*]. God keep the Duke!

DUKE. Louder, fellow, louder!

FIRST BURGHER [*A trifle louder*]. God keep the Duke!

DUKE. More gleefully, fellow; put more heart in't! See, here's another ducat for thee.

FIRST BURGHER [*Overjoyed*]. God keep the Duke!

DUKE [*Mockingly*]. My lords, the love of this simple fellow stirs me deeply. [*Addressing the* BURGHER *roughly.*] Begone, sirrah! [*Exit* BURGHER, *bowing low.*] This is the trick o't to buy popularity nowadays. Yea, we are naught, if we be not democratical. [*To the* DUCHESS.] So, gracious lady, you stir up mutiny amongst our citizens, and by your daily alms-giving have filched the love o' the common herd. I cannot suffer this.

BEATRICE [*Casting a glance at* GUIDO]. You are in error, my Lord; they love me not.

DUKE. I will not have you give bread to the folk, only because they be hungry.

BEATRICE. The poor have unimpeachable rights, — the right to pity and the right to mercy.

DUKE. Thou pratest to me of rights? And this is the

woman for whose sake I forewent my claim to three of the fairest towns in Italy, Pisa, Genoa and Orvieto.

BEATRICE. Promised, my lord, but not fulfilled! you broke your word, as alway.

DUKE. You do me wrong. Reasons of State it was. . . .

BEATRICE. What cause of State *can* justify the breach of plighted word?

DUKE. There is a forest nigh Pisa, yea, close by the city, where wild-boars lurk; when I promised Pisa to thy father, — the sanguine fool, — I had forgot the fine sport there.

BEATRICE. The man that is foresworn in honour, my Lord, doth forget all.

DUKE. In Genoa, that is the place — yea, I am sure on't — they say red surmullet do swim in the bay more plentiful than anywhere in Italy. [*Turning to one of his train.*] You, my lord, you seem a hearty trencherman, you can tell our Duchess if 'tis true.

BEATRICE. And Orvieto?

DUKE [*Yawning*]. It hath slipped my remembrance, why I gave him not Orvieto, — in terms of our covenant. Mayhap I felt not so disposed. [*Going up to the* DUCHESS.] Now, look about you. Here you are alone. Back to France is many a long dusty mile; and even there, your father keeps at his Court a bare hundred paltry knights. Hope'st yet for championship? Who of all these lords, the noble cavaliers of Padua, stands true to thee?

BEATRICE. Not one. [GUIDO *starts forward, but restrains himself.*]

DUKE. And never will, so long as I am Duke in Padua. Understand me, — I have had enow of thy charitable ways; thou art my property, so do what I bid. An 'tis my will to hold thee in the house, my Palace here must be thy prison; and if I will thou goest forth abroad, thou must from morn till eve be free as air.

BEATRICE. What right have you . . .?

DUKE. The second Duchess once asked me that same question; canst see her tomb in the Church of good St. Bartholomew, carven of red marble, — wondrous fine! Give me thine arm, Guido! My lords, let us throw off our falcons at the midday hour. Bethink you, you are alone here, noble lady.

[*Exit* DUKE, *leaning on* GUIDO'S *arm, and followed by his retinue.*]

BEATRICE [*Looking after them*]. Strange that anyone, blameless to all seeming, doth love the Duke, hangs on his lips, that foully poison every word, and shrinks not from him, as though bound to his service! Well, what of it? it doth concern me not. I stand alone, to love inaccessible. The Duke saith well, I am alone, forlorn and disgraced and belittled — did ever woman stand so all alone as I? The wooer calls us pretty children, saith we be not fit to make a life for ourselves, and therefore doth ruin the life we had. What said I, 'Wooers'? We are their goods and chattels, their slaves; we are not so fondly fondled as the dog that licks their hand, as the falcon on their wrist. I said, 'Wooers'? Nay, we be bought and sold, our very body is so much pelf to them. I wis it is poor woman's usual lot, — her life, mated with a man she loves not, makes shipwreck on his selfishness; but being usual, 'tis no less hard to bear. Meseems I never yet heard a woman laugh, laugh out of pure light-heartedness, — except one that stood at night i' the public street — poor soul! She had painted lips, a mask of joy to hide her sorrow, and she laughed, — pray God I may never laugh so. To die were better! [GUIDO *enters unobserved from behind; the* DUCHESS *throws herself down before a figure of the Madonna.*] Oh Holy Mary, with the sweet, wan look, ringed with little angel heads that hover round thee, know'st thou no succour for me? Oh Mother of God, know'st thou no succour?

GUIDO. No, I can bear it no more. I must speak to her, speak to my love. Am I, fair lady, embraced in your prayer?

BEATRICE [*Rising*]. Only unhappy souls need my intercession.

GUIDO. Then needs must I be one, for sure!

BEATRICE. Why so? Doth not the Duke do thee honour enow? dost lack advancement at our Court? 'Tis not within my power to give it thee; mine own self, I have as good as no weight here.

GUIDO. Of favour, your Grace, I have no lack from the Duke, — whom my soul loathes worse than hell, — I come on my knees to offer you true-proven service unto death.

BEATRICE. Alackaday! I am fallen so low in place, I can reward thee only with niggard thanks.

GUIDO [*Seizing her hand*]. And not with love? [*The* DUCHESS *starts back*, GUIDO *falls at her feet.*] Oh dear Saint! Forgive me, I have been over bold. Thy beauty sets my young blood glowing. An my mouth but touch thy hand in lowly greeting, leaps every nerve so fierce with passion, that I fear no extremity of daring for to win thy love. [*Springs to his feet.*] Bid me fare forth, and pluck renown from out the lion's jaws, — I will wrestle with the Nemean monster in the desert wastes! Toss into the throat of battle a riband, a flower, a bit of tinsel, anything, that hath once touched thee, I will bring it back to thee unscathed, in combat with all the knights of Christendom! Yea, more than that, bid me to scale the white cliffs of mighty England, and from her presumptuous scutcheon will I blot out thy France's lilies, which England, yon lion of the seas, hath filched from her.

Oh loved Beatrice! drive me not from thy side, for the minutes creep past leaden-footed without thee; though, an I look upon thy loveliness, the hours flit by like winged Mercuries, and the world gleams all golden.

BEATRICE. I never dreamed I could be really loved. Dost truly love me so immeasurably as thou dost declare?

GUIDO. Go, ask the sea-gull an she loves the waves, ask the roses an they love the rain, ask the lark, that will not sing before the break of dawn, an she loves the day, — and then these be but empty pictures, mere shadows of my love. 'Tis a fierce fire that all the waters of the ocean cannot extinguish. — Give me a word!

BEATRICE. Scarce know I what I should say.

GUIDO. Say, thou lov'st me.

BEATRICE. Is that thy behest? And must it be fulfilled forthwith? Yea, it might well be so, an if I really loved thee; but if not, what am I then to say?

GUIDO. An if thou lov'st me not, yet say thou dost; the lie would be shamed to truth upon thy tongue.

BEATRICE. Or should I remain for ever dumb? Lovers, they say, are happiest, when they be in doubt.

GUIDO. No! doubt doth kill me; and, must I die, let me die of joy, and not of doubt. Oh, tell me, — may I stay, or must I go?

BEATRICE. I would thou mightest neither stay nor go. If thou dost stay, thou steal'st my love from me; and if thou goest, thou takest it away with thee. An all the morning stars could sing, they might not manifest the greatness of my love. Guido, I love thee.

GUIDO [*With outstretched arms*]. Oh, never stop, — only by night, I thought once, sang the nightingale, — but if thou must be silent, let my lips find thine, that make so sweet a sound.

BEATRICE. My lips do not yet give thee my heart.

GUIDO. Dost thou steel that against me then?

BEATRICE. Ah, my love's lord, 'tis mine no longer; the first day I saw thee, I let my heart be filched away by thee, — thief against my will, who rashly brakest into my

guarded treasure house and stole away my jewel! Strange robbery, which doth enrich thee, without thy knowing it, and hath left me poorer, yet all so happy.

GUIDO [*Embracing her*]. Oh, my love, my love! Hide not thy head so! Let me open the little scarlet gates, that closed in music, dive after corals, and I will win a richer booty than all the gold the griffin guards in Armenia's wilderness.

BEATRICE. Thou, Guido, art my lord, what I possess is thine; what not, thy fancy lends me lavishly, which doth squander your treasures as they were a bauble. [*Kisses him.*]

GUIDO. How bold methinks I am to look at you like this. The gentle violet lurks beneath the leaf and fears to gaze at the great sun in dread of so much brightness; yet have mine eyes, presumptuous eyes! now grown so froward that like twin fixed stars they gaze at thee unwinking, rioting in thy loveliness.

BEATRICE. Dearest, would thou mightest watch me for aye! Thine eyes are polished mirrors; by looking in them, I can see myself therein, and so I know my likeness lives in thee.

GUIDO [*Taking her in his arms*]. Stay still, thou heavenly orb, and make this hour eternal! [*A pause.*]

BEATRICE. Sit a little lower, yea just so, that my fingers may slip through thy hair, that thy face may be lifted like a cup to meet my kiss.

Hast ever marked, if one unlock a long neglected room, — heavy with dust and fouled with stains of mould, that foot of man hath not trod for years, — take down the rusty bars from the windows and throw wide the broken shutters, for to let the sun stream in, — hast marked how the sun doth transform each sooty flake of dust into a brilliant atom of dancing gold? Mine heart is like to that long empty hall, love glints gaily into it, and hath lent all

life its gold. Dost not think love is the whole contents of life?

GUIDO. Yea, without love is life but an unhewn block, lying in the quarry, till the carver's hand awake the god within. Without love life is dumb as a common reed, that grows in marshes and by river banks, and holds no music.

BEATRICE. Yet therefrom the minstrel Love will cut a pipe, and draw forth music from it; so Love charms melody from out each life. Say I not true?

GUIDO. 'Tis women make it true. With pencil and with chisel do men work, — the dyer's son, Paul Veronese, their great rival at Venice, who painted God's Magdalen, slim as a lily and as white, mounting the Temple steps, and Raphael, who painted divine Madonnas, divine in their pure motherhood, — and yet are women the greatest artists of this earth; they model men's daily life, which the greed of gold of our days doth degrade, and make it fair by love.

BEATRICE. Ah, Guido, I would that thou and I were poor, — the poor, that love each other, are so rich.

GUIDO. Say once more that thou lov'st me, Beatrice.

BEATRICE [*Letting her fingers glide round his collar*]. How close the collar of thy doublet fits about thy neck! [COUNT MORANZONE *looks in through the door of the external corridor.*]

GUIDO. Nay, tell me that thou lov'st me.

BEATRICE. I do remember, when as a child I dwelt in my loved France at the Court at Fontainebleau, the King wore such a collar.

GUIDO. But tell me that thou lov'st me!

BEATRICE [*Jestingly*]. The King of France was an illustrious hero, yet was he not so kingly as thou art. Why needs must I confess my love to thee? [*She takes his head between her hands and lifts his face to hers.*] Thou

know'st I do belong to thee for ever, with soul and body both? [*She kisses him, then suddenly notices* MORANZONE *and springs up.*] Ha, what is that? [MORANZONE *disappears.*]

GUIDO. What, dearest?

BEATRICE. Methought I saw two eyes of flame prying upon us through the doorway.

GUIDO. Nay, it was nothing. Only the sentinel's shadow moved across the floor. [*The* DUCHESS *still stands staring at the window.*] 'Twas nothing, love.

BEATRICE. What now need trouble us, who are in Love's guard and keeping? 'Twere all indifferent to me, an if the world and its menial backbiters should trample down and tread out my life. They say the common flowers of the field do shed a sweeter perfume, if they be trod on, than if they bloom undisturbed, and many plants, else scentless, diffuse only in death, when they are broken and torn, the odours of Araby. So is it with young lives, which daily stress is like to crush; it doth express all their sweets and oft heightens yet more their charm. Love is the crown of life; think'st not 'tis so?

GUIDO. Come, let us sport and sing! I feel I fain would sing now.

BEATRICE. Nay, hush! At times it seems as though all existence were narrowed to one single transport of delight, and joy's very intensity laid a seal upon the lips.

GUIDO. Let my lips break this seal! Thou lov'st me, Beatrice?

BEATRICE. Is't not strange, that loving thee, I should love mine enemy?

GUIDO. Thine enemy, — what enemy?

BEATRICE. Thyself, who with Love's shaft hast pierced my heart, — poor heart, that lived but for itself alone, till thine arrow struck it.

GUIDO. Ah, Beatrice, myself have been wounded so

sore by this same bow, that all untended I lie here to die, unless, beloved physician, thou dost heal me.

BEATRICE. Nay, I cannot make thee whole, for I am sick of the same sickness.

GUIDO. Oh, how I love thee! I must e'en rob the cuckoo of his voice, and sing one note for aye.

BEATRICE. Nay, sing no other! An this be the cuckoo's lay, then is the nightingale hoarse-throated, and the shrill lark hath lost her melody.

GUIDO. Kiss me, Beatrice! [*She takes his head between her hands, bends over and kisses him; a loud knocking is heard at the door,* — GUIDO *springs up. A serving-man enters.*]

SERVING-MAN. A packet for your Worship!

GUIDO [*Carelessly*]. Ah, hand it here!

[*The serving-man hands him the packet in a wrapper of vermilion silk, and goes off; as* GUIDO *is in the act of opening it, the* DUCHESS *slips behind him and snatches it away in jest.*]

BEATRICE [*Laughing*]. What is to wager, it comes from a girl? — she would fain see thee wearing her colours; I do begrudge her the smallest part in thee. Nay, like a miser I must have thee all, e'en though I may spoil thee by my greed.

GUIDO. 'Tis nothing.

BEATRICE. A maid doth send it thee.

GUIDO. Thou knowest well, 'tis nothing.

BEATRICE [*Turns away and opens the packet*]. Traitor, tell me now, what means this: a dagger — two leopards on it of steel.

GUIDO [*Takes the dagger out of her hands*]. Oh God!

BEATRICE. Well then, I will look out o' window; mayhap I may recognise by his arms the messenger who gave it to the porter at the Gate. I will never rest till I do know thy secret. [*Runs out onto the loggia laughing.*]

GUIDO. 'Tis horrible! So soon have I forgot my father's death, so readily admitted love into mine heart, that now must I ruthlessly banish it away and let in murder, that knocks fiercely at the door. I must! Have I not sworn an oath? Yet not to-night. Nay, it must be to-day. Farewell then, all joy and light of life; farewell, all memory of gentleness; farewell, Beloved! Can I with blood-stained hands stroke and caress her hands of innocence? with lips still wet with gore meet hers? Can a murderer's eyes look into her flowerlike orbs, that would strike me blind, to languish henceforward in eternal night? Nay, murder hath set up a barrier betwixt us — too high for exchange of kisses.

BEATRICE. Guido!

GUIDO. Beatrice, forget, forget that name, strike it out for ever from thy life!

BEATRICE [*Drawing near him*]. Best beloved!

GUIDO [*Shrinking back*]. A barrier is risen up betwixt us twain, that we may not pass.

BEATRICE. Naught is there I dare not do, an thou be near me.

GUIDO. Ah, there it is, I cannot be near thee, cannot more breathe the same air with thee, nor greet thy beauty with glance from eye to eye; it doth unnerve my wavering heart and makes my flaccid hand to miss its aim. I prithee, let me go; forget that thou hast ever seen me!

BEATRICE. How, with thy kisses still hot upon my lips, forget the love plights that thou swarest?

GUIDO. I take them back.

BEATRICE. Thou canst not, Guido, they are a part of elemental nature; the air throbs with their harmony, and these fond oaths do give a sweeter melody to the song of birds.

GUIDO. Now is a barrier risen 'twixt us twain, before forgotten or not known.

BEATRICE. No, there is no barrier, Guido; in pauper's weeds I will follow thee to the end of the world.

GUIDO [*Wildly*]. The world is not wide enough to hold us both. Fare thee well for ever.

BEATRICE [*Calmly, with restrained passion*]. Why didst intrude into my life at all? Why sow in my tender heart the white flower of love?

GUIDO. Beatrice!

BEATRICE. Now thou art fain to tear it up root and branch, but every fibre holds my heart so fast, that, an thou breakest one, mine heart breaks too. Why didst come into my life? Why didst uncover the secret springs of my love, that long had been choked up? Ah, why?

GUIDO. Oh God!

BEATRICE [*Wringing her hands*]. Why didst break open the sluices of passion, till, like the waters of a flooded river that sweep away with them meadows and woods, Love with the triumphant might of an avalanche did whirl away my life with it? Must I drop by drop gather up again those waters? Ah me! a tear is formed of every drop, embittering my life with its salt savour.

GUIDO. Say no more, I do conjure thee, for I must needs leave thy life, to seek a way that is denied thee.

BEATRICE. I have heard tell that mariners, dying of thirst on a raft, wretched castaways on the wide seas, do dream of green meadows and rippling brooks, and then, their throats parched, awake to suffer yet more piteous torments, because sleep hath so deceived them; and so they die, cursing the sleep which did cradle them in dreams. I curse thee not, though I too have made shipwreck on the ocean men call despair.

GUIDO. Oh God, oh God!

BEATRICE. Ah, stay, stay, Guido; listen, I love thee. [*A short pause*]. Is there no echo, when I say I love thee, to sound back to me? Is it dead?

GUIDO. All, all is dead, — save only one thing, and that dies to-night.

BEATRICE. Then must I school my lips to parting; and yet, methinks they'll never learn the lesson, for when I shape them to cry farewell, naught will they say but this: I love thee! Must I chide the rebels? But can one lip chide the other? Ah, both are guilty, and refuse to utter the fatal word.

GUIDO. Then must I say it for them. Farewell; never can we see each other more. [*Rushes towards her.*]

BEATRICE. Art going? Nay, touch me not, — go, I say, go! [*Exit* GUIDO.] Never again, — was that it, — never see each other again? Well, I know my duty. I will exchange the lamp of love for a funeral torch, lay my bridal wreath upon my bier, alter my wedding-march into a dirge, and so singing die, like the swan.

Oh grief, an thou art so enamoured of my life, why couldst not choose another form? — the mask of pain, not the smile of love, the raven's voice, not the nightingale's, the mole's blind eyes, not those sapphire orbs, that like the summer sky are so deep blue God would seem visible in them, — then, grief, then should I have known thee for what thou art.

Why in heaven's name spake he of a barrier? No, there is no barrier raised betwixt us; he lied, and should I therefore shun henceforth what I have loved, and hate what I adored? We women live not after such a guise. For should I cut his image from my heart, my heart, in pilgrim wise, would follow bleeding after that image through the world and summon it back with the soft call of love.

[*Enter the* DUKE *equipped for the chase with Falconers and dogs.*]

DUKE. You kept us waiting, and our dogs to boot.

BEATRICE. I do not hunt to-day.

DUKE. Why so?

BEATRICE. I cannot go, my Lord.

DUKE. What, baby face, thou dar'st to cross my will? I could bind thee on a jade and chase thee through the streets, that the rabble, — the folk thou feedest! — might wave their caps and scoff at thee.

BEATRICE. Hast never then a kindly word for me?

DUKE. With kindly words a man doth catch his enemies. Thee I hold within the hollow of my hand; why need I waste flattering speeches?

BEATRICE. I am not coming.

DUKE [*Beating his boot with his riding whip*]. I have changed my mind. Thou art to remain at home, and like a devoted wife, mayst watch from the lattice for our return. 'Twere too terrible if any accident befell thy dear consort! Ho, Lords, come on, the dogs are hot-foot, — and I too, with so dutiful a wife beside me. Where is Childe Guido?

MAFFIO. My lord, I have not seen him for a full hour past.

DUKE. No matter, soon enow I shall get a sight of him. You, gracious lady, tarry soft at home and spin. I wager you my word, home-keeping virtues are oft very commendable, — in other folks.

[*Exit* DUKE *with his train.*]

BEATRICE. The stars do fight against me, that is the sum of all. Wherefore will I this night, when my lord is asleep, make good use of my dagger and so end my days. My heart is like a stone that nothing scores save the dagger's edge. There let it find the name that lies hid within. To-night must death sever me from the Duke, — but yet he too, the old Duke, may die to-day. Why not? Yesterday his hand was stricken palsied; men have oft been slain by such a stroke, — and why not he? Are there not fever too and ague and fit, as mostly such accompany old

age? Nay, nay, he dies not, he is too sinful. The honour-worthy die before their time. The good die, — beside whom, in the hideous pollution of his life, he is a leper. Women and children die; the Duke dies not, he is too sinful.

Can it be, that sin hath a sort of immortality, unknown to virtue? Can it be that the bad man thrives on what to other mortals is death, like poisonous herbs that live from corruption? Nay, nay, God would never suffer that. Yet my lord dies not, he is too sinful. Wherefore 'tis I alone will die to-night. Grim death must so my bridegroom be, the grave my secret pleasure house of joy. A churchyard is the world, and like a coffin each one doth carry a skeleton within.

[COUNT MORANZONE *enters, all in black; he crosses the stage in the background, gazing about him anxiously.*]

MORANZONE. Guido? Where is he? nowhere can I find him.

BEATRICE [*Perceiving him*]. Oh God! 'Twas thou didst take away my love from me.

MORANZONE [*With flashing eyes*]. How, hath he forsaken thee?

BEATRICE. What! dost not know? Give him back to me, oh, give him back to me; else will I have thy body torn limb from limb, and thy head nailed to the pillory, till the carrion vultures have flayed it bare. Better hadst thou crossed the lioness's path than come betwixt my love and me. [*With gathering passion.*] Oh, give him back, thou know'st not how I love him. But now he knelt on that seat, here stood, there gazed at me and kissed my wide open portals, dropt a song of love, so wild with hand and spoiled these lips with his, and in these ears, yearning that all around the birds fell silent. Give him back to me!

MORANZONE. He loves you not.

BEATRICE. The plague dry up thy tongue, that saith so! Give him back to me!

MORANZONE. You will never, noble lady, see him more, neither this night nor any other night.

BEATRICE. What is thy name?

MORANZONE. What is my name? — Revenge! [*Exit.*]

BEATRICE. Revenge! I have never harmed a little child; what seeks revenge then at my door? No matter, death stands ready there on watch, to light me with his gloomy torch. 'Tis true, men hate thee, Death, yet to me thou wilt be dearer than my best beloved. Send forth thy messengers then straightway, urge on the weary steeds of lagging day and hurry forward night, thy sister. Enwrap the world in black, and let thy parson, the owl, screech from his ruined tower, the toad croak, and the bat, slave of the dark Persephone, whir on fluttering pinions through the gloom. Tear up the shrieking mandrakes, that they make us music for the dance, and bid the mole dig deep thy cold, narrow bed. For this night will I lie within thine arms.

END OF ACT II

THIRD ACT

ACT III

A Broad Corridor in the Duke's Palace

To left, a window affording a view over Padua by moonlight. To right, a flight of steps leading to a door, before which hangs a curtain of crimson satin embroidered with the Ducal arms in gold. On the bottom step is seated a black-robed figure. The scene is lighted by an iron brazier in which tow is burning. Thunder and lightning. Night-time.

[GUIDO *climbs in by the window*].

GUIDO. The storm grows fiercer; how my ladder swayed! At every shock methought the ropes had parted! [*Looks back at the city.*] Great God, what a night! In the skies the crash of thunder, and wild lightnings that blaze through the town from pinnacle to pinnacle, till the pale houses tremble and seem to shudder each time another flash darts along the streets. [*Crosses stage to the foot of the steps.*] Ha, who art thou, that lurk'st on the stairs watching like Death for a guilty soul? [*A pause.*] Art dumb? Hath the storm paralysed thy tongue and benumbed thy speech? Out of the way; in yonder chamber have I work to accomplish, that no man else can do. [*The figure rises and removes its mask.*]

MORANZONE. Guido Ferranti! Thy dead father shouts with glad triumph this night!

GUIDO [*Confused*]. What, are you here?

MORANZONE. I was waiting your coming.

GUIDO [*Looking away from him*]. I did not expect you; yet am I glad I can now tell you mine intent.

MORANZONE. First would I inform thee of my plans! Know then, the horses stand ready at the Parma gate; once thou hast performed thine office, we ride thence away. To-morrow night, an our steeds prove trusty, we shall be at Parma. There are already warned the old-time friends of thy noble father, who have long been stirring up a revolt of the burghers. By dint of gold and empty promises I have won to our side many folk that now hold to the Duke, the usurper. Once the Duke is dead, the soldiery is soon induced to mutiny, and then thou mountest thy father's throne as lawful lord of Padua.

GUIDO. It cannot, cannot be.

MORANZONE. It shall be!

GUIDO. Now hear me, Count Moranzone, I am resolved not to kill the Duke.

MORANZONE. Say that again! Mine ears have cheated me, eld hath numbed my powers. I am grown a grey-beard afore my time. What didst say? Thou would'st with the dagger in thy girdle revenge thy father's bloody murder. Didst thou say that?

GUIDO. No, I said, Sir Count, I was resolved not to kill the Duke.

MORANZONE. Impossible, my senses do deceive me; or the midnight storm-laden air changes thy meaning in the saying.

GUIDO. You hear aright; I will not kill the man.

MORANZONE. And what, traitor, of thine oath?

GUIDO. I am determined to break it!

MORANZONE. And what of thy father's murder?

GUIDO. Think you, my father would have joy, to see this old man's blood reeking on my hands?

MORANZONE. Yea, he would laugh for pleasure.

GUIDO. Not so — the other world hath better knowledge; vengeance is God's, leave it to God.

MORANZONE. Thou art God's instrument of vengeance.

GUIDO. Nay! God needs no instrument but his own hand. I will not kill the man.

MORANZONE. Wilt not! then why art thou here?

GUIDO. Count Moranzone, I will push into the Duke's chamber, to lay the dagger here on the sleeper's bosom, and this paper. When he awakes, he will learn in whose power he was, who spared his life; that is the fairest revenge for me.

MORANZONE. Thou wilt not slay him?

GUIDO. No!

MORANZONE. Ignoble scion of the noblest of fathers, who dost not begrudge another hour of life to the man who sold him.

GUIDO. You stayed my hand therefrom. Else had I killed him in the open market-place, the day first I saw him.

MORANZONE. 'Twas not the time then; now the hour is come, and like a girl, thou pratest of mercy.

GUIDO. No, but of right revenge, such as beseems my father's son.

MORANZONE. Unhappy father, once more betrayed, and by your own son! Thou art a dastard; else draw thy steel, dash into the Duke's room, and bring me back his black heart upon thy sword. Once he is dead, then thou may'st talk to me of noble vengeance.

GUIDO. Hear me! Upon your honour, upon your love toward my father's name, think you, my father, that puissant lord, that doughty hero, that knightly warrior, would e'er have crept in like a thief by night, and stabbed a greybeard in his bed? Speak!

MORANZONE [*After some hesitation*]. Thou didst take an oath, and thou must keep it! Dost deem I know not thy secret, thy commerce with the Duchess?

GUIDO. Stop, thou liar! The moon herself is not so chaste, the stars not so pure.

MORANZONE. And yet thou lov'st her, weak fool, who usest love but only as a plaything!

GUIDO. Yea, thou dost well to talk; in thy veins, grey-beard, youth stirs not stormily. Thy bleared eye hath barred its veiled gateway to beauty, thy ear is stopped, robbed of its erstwhile keenness, and shut to this world's music. Thou talk'st of love, and knowest not what love is.

MORANZONE. I too, young sir, have wandered moon-struck, have sworn, sick with yearning, to die, and died not; I too have nimbly rhymed of *loves* and *doves* in halting verses sung to a cracked guitar, as lovers use to do; I know the trick o't, mad lust of food and bed. . . . At bottom we all are beasts — love is mere sensuality under a holy name.

GUIDO. Now am I assured you know naught at all of Love. Love is life's sacrament; it hath magic to charm virtue out of naught, and purifies from all the nauseous refuse of this world. It is the fire that refines the gold from dross, the van that sifts chaff and wheat, the Spring that from the hard-frozen soil lets innocency put forth her rosebuds. God walks no more amongst mankind — his image, Love, goes in His stead. The man who loves a woman knoweth the secret as well of the Creator as of the world created. There is no house so lowly, so poor and pitiful, that, if the indwellers be pure of heart, Love shuns the same; but an if bloody murder knock at the Palace gate and find an entrance, then creeps Love wounded forth and dies. That is the penalty ordained of God for sin. The bad man cannot love. [*Groans are heard from the* DUKE'S *sleeping-room.*] What is that? Do you not hear it?

MORANZONE. Nay, 'twas nothing.

GUIDO. I take this to be woman's mission, — through the power of Love to save man's soul; love for my Beatrice hath taught me to see a more sublime, more holy ven-

geance, an if I spare the Duke, than in any bloody deed of murderous midnight violence, — young hands choking out an old man's life. Was't not for Love's sake that Christ, who was himself Love incarnate, exhorted men to forgive their enemies?

MORANZONE [*Scoffingly*]. That was in Palestine, not at Padua — a saying coined for Saints. I have to deal with men.

GUIDO. 'Tis for all times.

MORANZONE. Wherein is shown the Duchess's gratitude? Will she bend her cheek to thine, and fondle thee, because her consort can no more torture her?

GUIDO. Woe is me! never must I see her face more. Scarce twelve hours agone I took leave of her so abruptly, with such unruly passion, that she hath shut fast her heart against me. No, I shall never see her more.

MORANZONE. What art minded to do?

GUIDO. Once I have laid the dagger in its place, I leave Padua this very night.

MORANZONE. And then?

GUIDO. I go to enroll my name with the Doge of Venice, that he send me speedily to the wars to fight against the Heathen in the Holy Land; there will I, for my life is but a burden to me, throw myself recklessly upon some foeman's spear. [*Renewed groaning from the* DUKE's *chamber.*] Hear you not someone crying?

MORANZONE. I hear continually from the dark purlieus of the grave one crying for vengeance. We waste time; the morn is near; art thou determined not to kill the Duke?

GUIDO. I am so resolved.

MORANZONE. Guido Ferranti, there in yonder room lies the man who erst sold your father and delivered him to the headsman's hands. There he sleeps; thou hast thy father's dagger; wilt thou not slay him?

GUIDO. I will not.

MORANZONE. Unhappy father, thou art left unavenged.

GUIDO. Unhappier yet were thy son a murderer.

MORANZONE. Pshaw, what is life?

GUIDO. I know not, Sir Count; I did not give it, and I dare not take it.

MORANZONE. Not oft have I thanked God so heartily as now, that he hath bestowed never a son on me! Why, what bastard blood then flows in thy veins, that, having thine enemy in thy power, thou let'st him escape! I would thou hadst tarried where thou wert.

GUIDO. Mayhap it had been better so. Mayhap the best of all, an I had never seen this world of sorrow!

MORANZONE. Farewell!

GUIDO. Farewell to you, Count Moranzone! One day the purport of my vengeance will be clear to you.

MORANZONE. Never.

[*Exit by the window, and down the rope-ladder.*]

GUIDO. Thou, father, knowest of mine intent and art content with this nobler vengeance. Whenas I grant the man his life, I ween I am doing as thou would'st have done thyself. I cannot tell, father, whether human voice can break through the iron prison of the dead, whether the departed have any tidings of what we do and leave undone for their sakes. And yet, methinks, I feel a presence near me, like a shadow by my side, and meseems as though spirit kisses touched my lips, and left them sanctified. [*Kneels.*] Oh father, canst thou not break the laws of Death and show thyself in bodily shape, that I may grasp thy hand? Nay, nay, 'tis naught. [*Rises.*] It is the midnight phantoms do befool us, the night deceives us like a puppet-showman, persuading us that what is not, is. 'Tis waxing late; I must now to my work. [*Draws a letter from his bosom and reads.*] When he wakes and sees this letter and the dagger beside it, disgust will

take hold on him for his life. Will he mayhap repent and reform his ways? Or will he mock, because a young wight hath spared him, his bitter enemy? 'Tis all one to me. Thy errand, father, it is that I fulfil, — thy orders and my love's, which hath taught me to know thee as thou art. [*Glides up the steps; just as he is stretching out his hand to draw back the curtain, the* DUCHESS *comes forward to meet him, all in white.* GUIDO *starts back.*] Beatrice?

BEATRICE. Guido, is it thou here, — so late at night?

GUIDO. Thou stainless angel of my life, thou comest surely from God with a heavenly message, — that 'tis nobler to practise mercy than revenge.

BEATRICE. For mercy I do beseech thee from my heart of hearts.

GUIDO. Oh father, now do I know thy will; for with Mercy hand in hand appeared Love like a God upon my path.

BEATRICE. I felt sure thou would'st come back again, when thou didst leave me so cruelly. Oh why didst do it? I make no quarrel, for now can I keep thee, feel thy heart's pulse throb soft and fearful against mine. We are a pair of cage birds, that kiss each other through the bars. — The time slips by, dawn will be here in an hour; get horses for the ride to Venice, there I am in no suspicion from them.

GUIDO. I follow thee, dearest, to the world's end.

BEATRICE. Nay, but dost love me verily?

GUIDO. Loves the lark the grey of dawn, that wakes its note?

BEATRICE. Can naught change thee?

GUIDO. Naught in this world. So sure as swings the mariner's needle, so turn I to the loadstone of thy love.

BEATRICE. No obstacle rises now betwixt us?

GUIDO. None now, nor in the future.

BEATRICE. That is *my* work.

GUIDO. Now wait till I do mine.

BEATRICE. Wilt thou go from me? leave me again as erst?

GUIDO. In one moment will I fare back. First I must haste into the Duke's chamber and leave this letter there, and this dagger with it, — that when he wakes. . . .

BEATRICE. Who wakes?

GUIDO. The Duke.

BEATRICE. He will never wake more.

GUIDO. Is he dead?

BEATRICE. Yea, he is dead.

GUIDO. Oh God, how wonderful are Thy ways! Could I e'er have thought that, this very night when I entrusted to Thy hands the vengeance that is Thine, Thou wouldst touch the man with Thy finger and summon him before Thy judgment-seat?

BEATRICE. I have just stabbed him. . . .

GUIDO [*in horror*]. Oh!

BEATRICE. — in his sleep. Come nearer, beloved, let me tell you all. Ere I begin, kiss me on the mouth. What! thou wilt not kiss me? Well, thou wilt, when thou hast learned how I slew him. Meseemed, after thou hadst left me in anger, that life was stale, unprofitable, without thy love. I had resolved to kill myself this night. About an hour agone, I woke, drew forth my dagger from beneath the pillow, where I had hid it with this intent, bared the blade and tried its sharpness, and thought of thee, how fondly I loved thee. The weapon was already aimed upon myself, when I turned mine eyes to the grey-beard, ripe in years and wickedness, as he lay there, still muttering curses in his sleep. At sight of that hateful face a lightning flash shot though me suddenly: this is the barrier Guido spake of — whom else could he mean when he said *barrier* but him? —

What happened next, I scarce know. One thing only, that betwixt him and me a reeking mist of blood arose.

GUIDO. Horrible!

BEATRICE. Yea, well mightest thou call the sight I saw horrible; there was a rain of gore, then he groaned grievously, and then the groaning died away. Then I only heard the blood drip, drip down on the floor.

GUIDO. Enough, enough.

BEATRICE. Wilt thou not kiss me now? Dost not remember what thou saidst, — that women's love makes angels of us men; well, man's love makes martyrs of poor women, who bear everything for his sake.

GUIDO. God!

BEATRICE. Thou hast naught to say?

GUIDO. Speech dies betwixt my lips.

BEATRICE. The Duke was slain with this steel. I never thought he would have bled so sore. Well, water may wash clean my hands, is't not so? But my soul? Enough, enough! let us begone hence! Is not the barrier betwixt us fallen? What would'st thou more? Come now, the morn draws nigh. [*Lays her hand on* GUIDO'S.]

GUIDO [*Shrinking away from her*]. Lost Saint! Angel from hell! What bloody demon was it set thee on? That thou didst kill thy consort is naught, — Hell was already gaping for his soul, — but thou hast murdered Love along with him, and where Love was, is now but a bloody stain, that breathes forth reek of plague and pestilence, and chokes Love.

BEATRICE [*In a sort of amazement*]. I did it for thee. Hadst thou so willed, I had never suffered it. *Thou* art to remain forsooth without spot or blemish, untouched, blameless, unsmirched! Men know not what women do for love's sake. Have I not destroyed my soul for all eternity?

Oh, be kind to me; I did it for thee.

GUIDO. Touch me not; there flows a slender stream of blood betwixt us, that yet can ne'er be bridged. When thou didst stab thy husband, thou didst smite Love to the heart with the same blow. We must see each other no more.

BEATRICE [*Wringing her hands*]. For thee! For thee! I did it for thee; canst forget that? Thou spakest of a barrier betwixt us twain; now the barrier lies in yon upper chamber, laid low, destroyed, shattered and overthrown, — it can divide us no more.

GUIDO. Thou didst misunderstand me, sin was the barrier, and thou hast set it up thyself; crime was the barrier, murder was the barrier, and thine own hand hath built it up so high it shuts out Heaven and God.

BEATRICE. I did it for thee, thou canst not, must not, forsake me. Guido, hear! See to getting horses, let us set forth to-night. What was is like an evil dream — forgotten, the future beckons us; are we not faring forth to find sweet days of love in the flowery meads? We will laugh; nay, then we will weep, if only we weep together, thou and I; I will serve thee like a poor drudge, like any handmaid. I will be so humble, so full of lowliness; thou dost not know me!

GUIDO. Nay, nay, I know thee now. Begone, begone, I say, from my sight!

BEATRICE [*Pacing backwards and forwards*]. Ah God! how fondly I have loved this man!

GUIDO. Never! Else would Love have stayed thine arm, when thou didst sully his sanctuary, which only innocency may rightly enter.

BEATRICE. These are mere words, words, words.

GUIDO. Begone! How could we ever share the holy meal of love? Thou hast poured poison in the consecrated wine, murder dips his finger in the cup. I had liefer have borne a thousand deaths.

BEATRICE. Since I did the deed, I *have* borne a thousand deaths.

GUIDO. 'Tis life, not death, thou hast to dread.

BEATRICE [*Throwing herself upon her knees*]. Then strike me dead! I have poured forth blood, pour forth more yet, and heaven, or else hell, will greet us twain united. Draw thy sword, and quick make reckoning with Death, who yet licks his lips after this feast. Quick, quick, let thy sword pierce to my heart, 'twill find there but the image of its lord. But an thou wilt not kill me with thy sword, then bid me fall upon this recking knife, and I will do it.

GUIDO [*Wresting the knife from her hand*]. Give it me, give it me, I say. Oh God! thy very hand is wet with blood. Hell is here, I can tarry no longer.

BEATRICE. Wilt thou not raise me up, or must I like a beggar grovel on my knees?

GUIDO. Let me never behold thy face again!

BEATRICE. Ah, well for me, had I never seen thee! But bethink thee, 'twas for thee I did it. [GUIDO *shrinks away; kneeling, she seizes his hands.*] Nay, Guido, grant me hearing for a brief space! Till thou camest to Padua, I lived indeed a lamentable life there, but free from thoughts of murder, — subject to the cruelty of my husband, obedient to his unrighteous wishes, as pure as any maid of noble lineage, that now would draw back shuddering from my touch. Then thou camest, Guido, and I heard from thy lips the first words of kindness I had ever listened to since I left France. What then! Thou camest hither, in thine ardent eyes I read the meaning of love, every word from thee rang like music in my numbed soul. Thou didst shine splendid, like the good Saint Michael in Santa Croce, the Church I use to pray in. Shall I ever go there to pray again? In thy bright, young face glowed the clear light of morn-

ing — and I loved thee, yet hid my love from thee. Thou didst pay court to me, didst kneel before me, as now I kneel at thy feet. With sweet-sounding oaths thou didst vow love to me, and I trusted thee. I thought how that many women in the world, if they were wedded to this monster, fettered to him, like galley-slaves to a leper, — that many women would have assailed thee as temptresses. I did not so. I know, an I had done it, albeit I had not lain in the very dust before thee, thou wouldst have loved me unchangingly. [*Approaches him timidly after a pause.*] Whether thou dost understand me even now, I cannot tell, Guido; for thee I have committed the outrage, that hath chilled my young blood to ice, for thee, and thee alone. [*Stretching out her arms.*]

Wilt thou not speak to me? Love me a little; ah, my youth hath so lacked love, so yearned for friendship.

GUIDO. I dare not look upon thee; what thou cravest is too, too publicly infamous. Get thee gone to thy chamberwomen!

BEATRICE. Ha, ha! there speaks a man! — Hadst *thou* come to me with guilt-laden soul, a foul murder thou hadst committed not for love, but lucre, I would have sat me upon thy bed and watched by thee the livelong night, that remorse might not distil its poison in thine ear and drive sleep away. For the guilty man best merits love in his torment.

GUIDO. Where guilt is, love hath naught to seek.

BEATRICE. Where guilt is, ought not love to be? Oh God! how differently we women love from men. Many and many a woman lives here in Padua, that toils and moils and wears her fingers to the bone in hard work — the husband wastes the scanty week's wage in dissolute carouse, in the boisterous tavern, then staggers home late o' the Saturday night, to find his wife seated at the fireless hearth, lulling asleep her whimpering child. At that he

starts beating his poor wife, because the child cries with hunger and the fire is black. Yet the wife loves him, rises up next morning, her face all swollen with grief and marks of blows, and tidies the house, sets her work in trim, forces a smile and is but too glad if he beat her not before their child another time! — That is a woman's love. [*Pause.*] Thou dost not speak. Oh be kind to me, while yet the summer of my life shines bright. Thou canst not drive me from thy side; whither am I to go, an if thou reject me? For thee hath this hand murdered life, for thee my soul hath undone itself beyond redemption.

GUIDO. Begone from my sight! The dead man is a spirit, and our love hovers like a spectre round its desert grave and wanders through this charnel-house, and weeps, because it was murdered when thy consort was slain. Dost not see that?

BEATRICE. I see this, that when men love, they give women scant, scant measure. but women give all they have, when *they* love. That is what I see now, Guido.

GUIDO. Away! Away! Awake thy dead to life, ere thou dar'st return.

BEATRICE. Ah, would to God I could awake the dead, give back the glassy eye its power of vision, the tongue its erstwhile flow of words, the heart its life-pulse — but it cannot be. What's done is done; once dead, dead for aye; no more the fire warms, or the winter chills with all its snows. Something is flown; call him, no answer comes, — make jest, he laughs no more, — stab him, he never bleeds.

Would that I *could* awake him! Oh God, turn back thy sun a brief while, erase this night in the book of time and blot it out. Reverse the sun and let me be what an hour agone I was. Nay, nay, time stands not still for anything, the sun stays not his course, though remorse cry e'er so hoarsely. But thou, beloved, has thou no word

of pity more for me? Oh Guido, Guido, kiss me once again! Force me not to some desperate resolve! A woman waxes mad, when so entreated. Wilt thou not kiss me yet once more?

GUIDO [*Holding up the knife*]. Nay, not till the blood is dried upon this steel, nor even then.

BEATRICE. How scant pity, Saviour, is for us women in this rough world! Men do entice us to the abyss, and then desert us when we fall into it.

GUIDO [*Wildly*]. Go, go to join thy dead!

BEATRICE [*Going up the steps*]. Well then, I will go! May you one day find more pity than thou hast given me.

GUIDO. Let me find pity, when I do commit foul midnight murder.

BEATRICE [*Descending three or four steps again*]. Murder thou saidst? Murder is an hungered and doth crave for more. Death, his twin brother, is not satisfied; but stalks shrieking through the house and will not be appeased till he have company. Tarry a while, Death, I will give thee a faithful servant to fare with thee. Stay shrieking, murder, thou shalt enjoy a full feast, till thou be satiate.

A storm will threaten this house before morn, so fearful that the white moon is already changed to grey for very horror; a light wind sweeps moaning round the house, the stars above haste madly along their heavenly path, as if the night were melting in tears of fire for what the day brings with it. Oh weep, lamenting heaven! Weep thine eyes out! Though grief like a deluge drowned all the universe, till it became one ocean of bitter tears, yet were't not enough! [*A peal of thunder.*] Dost not understand? the heavens have mounted their artillery. Revenge is waked, and her sleuth hounds are let loose on the world. Who of us twain calls down the lightning on his head, let him beware the hurt that lurks within the forked

levin's flame. [*A flash of lightning, followed by a peal of thunder.*]

GUIDO. Away! Away!

[*Exit the* DUCHESS. *As she raises the crimson door-curtain, she throws one last look back at* GUIDO, *without the latter showing any sign of relenting. Thunder again.*]

In ashes at my feet lies my life, love itself is slain. In its stead hath murder crept in on stealthy bloodstained feet. And she, she who hath wrought the deed, — yet she loved me and did the outrage for my sake! Beatrice, Beatrice, come back!

[*Just as he is mounting the steps, the tread of soldiers is heard approaching*]. Ha, what is that? The gleam of torches and swift hurrying feet. God grant they do not seize her. [*The approaching sounds grow louder*]. Beatrice! there is still time for flight. Come down, come down! [*The* DUCHESS's *voice is heard from without.*]

BEATRICE. This way fled my husband's murderer.

[*Down the steps hurries a troop of soldiers. At first they do not see* GUIDO, *until the* DUCHESS *appears, surrounded by her attendants carrying torches, at the top of the stairs and points out where* GUIDO *stands. He is at once arrested. One of the men-at-arms snatches the knife from his hands and shows it to the Captain of the Watch.*]

END OF ACT III

FOURTH ACT

ACT IV

Hall of Justice

The lower part of the walls is hung with stamped grey velvet, the upper part painted red. Gilded symbolic figures support the roof, which is decorated with red stripes; frieze and skirting-boards are grey. A canopy of white satin with gold flower pattern is erected for the DUCHESS. *Below this, a long bench, draped with a red cloth, for the Judges. Below this again a table for the Clerks of the Court. Two soldiers stand either side of the Canopy, and two more guard the door. The citizens have some of them already entered, while others are still arriving and exchanging greetings. Two Ushers in violet uniforms keep order with long white wands.*

FIRST BURGHER. Good morrow, neighbour Anthony.

SECOND BURGHER. Good morrow, neighbour Dominic.

FIRST BURGHER. 'Tis a memorable day for Padua, eh? — the Duke dead.

SECOND BURGHER. Let me tell thee this, neighbour Dominic, I have never lived a right day's life since the last Duke died — as true as I'm an honest man.

FIRST BURGHER. They'll examine him first, and then judge him, won't they, neighbour Anthony?

SECOND BURGHER. Nay, nay! else might disputes occur. First he'll be judged, that he may get his deserts, and then the examination will be held, so that no injustice is possible.

FIRST BURGHER. Well, well, 'twill go hard with his neck, there's no doubt o' that.

SECOND BURGHER. Yea, 'tis most impious wicked to spill the blood of a Duke.

FIRST BURGHER. A Duke must have blue blood i' his veins, eh?

SECOND BURGHER. As I look on't, our Duke's blood was black, like his black soul.

FIRST BURGHER. Have a care, neighbour Anthony, the Usher with the blue eyes hath marked thee.

SECOND BURGHER. For what I care, let him cast his blue eyes on me an he will; he can't knock me down with 'em.

THIRD BURGHER. What think ye specially of the young fellow who stuck his knife into the Duke?

SECOND BURGHER. 'Tis a well bred, well dispositioned, well looking lad, — and natheless a villain, for he hath killed the Duke.

THIRD BURGHER. He hath done't for the first time. Mayhap the law will give him extenuating circumstances, seeing 'tis a case of 'first offence.'

SECOND BURGHER. Yea truly, I never thought o' that. But then the Law is hard on every man.

USHER. Hold thy tongue, rascal!

SECOND BURGHER. What, am I thy mirror, that thou miscall'st me rascal?

FIRST BURGHER. Here comes one o' the Household. How now, Dame Lucia, what news from Court? How is't with thy poor mistress, the Duchess with the gentle face?

LUCIA. A fine day truly! a fine day o' calamity! Alack-aday, what a day and what a calamity! This very year come Michaelmas, 'tis just nineteen year since I wedded my good man. Now we be at August, and the Duke is murdered; there's a notable coincidence for ye!

SECOND BURGHER. Ah, if 'tis a notable coincidence, mayhap the lad will not be done for. 'Gainst coincidences is no law; at least I know o' none 'gainst incidents.

FIRST BURGHER. But how goes it with the Duchess?

LUCIA. I was sure some disaster was coming on the house; for six weeks past the cakes have all been burnt o' the one side, and only last Martinmas eve a big moth, with wings, flew into the candle, so that of sheer fright I well nigh —

SECOND BURGHER. But tell us of the Duchess, good gossip; how doth she fare?

LUCIA. I' fegs, and 'tis high time ye asked news of her; the poor lady is near out of her wits. The whole night long she hath never closed an eye, but hath paced back and forth her chamber. I begged her to take somewhat, a whey-posset or a sup of aquavitæ, and get to bed, and not grudge a spell of sleep to her shattered nerves; but, "nay, nay," she answered, "I am afraid of dreaming!" What think ye of her word, — strange, is't not?

SECOND BURGHER. Great folks be something short of sense; Providence doth make it up to 'em in fine clothes.

LUCIA. Well, well, this is all I can say: God keep us from murder, so long as we live.

[MORANZONE *enters hastily.*]

MORANZONE. Is the Duke dead?

SECOND BURGHER. His heart hath a knife stuck in't, and that can scarce be healthful for any man.

MORANZONE. Who is accused of the murder?

SECOND BURGHER. The prisoner, Sir.

MORANZONE. Who is the prisoner?

SECOND BURGHER. Why, the man they do accuse of having murdered the Duke.

MORANZONE. I mean, what is his name?

SECOND BURGHER. Why, just whatever his god-fathers baptised him by? what could it be else?

USHER. Guido Ferranti is his name, noble sir.

MORANZONE. Yea, I knew it almost before you told me. [*Aside.*] 'Tis strange he should have killed the

Duke, seeing he left me in so different a mind. Methinks, when he looked on the man, the fiendish bewrayer of his father, then passionate anger drew from out his heart all his boyish love-lore and planted revenge there instead. But I wonder he escaped not. [*Mingling again with the crowd.*] Say, how was he seized?

THIRD BURGHER. Why surely, by the forelock, Sir.

MORANZONE. I mean, who seized him?

THIRD BURGHER. Why verily, they who arrested him.

MORANZONE. Who raised the alarm?

THIRD BURGHER. That I cannot tell you, Sir.

LUCIA. The Duchess herself denounced him.

MORANZONE [*Aside*]. The Duchess! That hath an ugly sound.

LUCIA. Of course! The dagger was still in his hand — the Duchess's dagger.

MORANZONE. What say you?

LUCIA. With the Duchess's dagger was my Lord Duke slain.

MORANZONE [*Aside*]. Some mystery lurks behind all this, that I cannot fathom.

SECOND BURGHER. They tarry long ere they come into Court.

FIRST BURGHER. They will come soon enow, I trow, for the prisoner.

USHER. Silence! silence there!

FIRST BURGHER. Dost break the silence thine own self, Sir Usher, ordering us to keep it.

[*The President of the Court and the Judges enter.*]

SECOND BURGHER. Who is yonder fellow in scarlet. Is't the headsman?

THIRD BURGHER. Nay, that is the Chief Justiciar.

[GUIDO *is brought in under guard.*]

SECOND BURGHER. There comes the prisoner for sure.

THIRD BURGHER. He looks a likely lad enow.

FIRST BURGHER. Ay, but that is all his wiliness; scoundrels nowadays do look so respectable, that respectable folk, an they would be different from 'em, must needs look like scoundrels.

[*The headsman enters, and takes his place behind* GUIDO.]

SECOND BURGHER. Here comes the headsman! By'r Lord — think ye the axe is sharp?

FIRST BURGHER. Yea, a deal sharper than thy wits; but the edge is not turned toward him, mark ye that, neighbours?

SECOND BURGHER [*Scratching his neck*]. 'Pon my word, I had liefer 'twere not quite so nigh.

FIRST BURGHER. Pshaw, needst have no fear, man; us common folk they never behead, but just set us a-swing at end of a rope. [*Fanfare of trumpets without.*]

THIRD BURGHER. What mean the trumpets? Is the sitting over already?

FIRST BURGHER. Nay, that doth mean the Duchess.

[*Enter the* DUCHESS *in black velvet; her train of flowered black velvet is borne by pages clad in violet. With her enter the* CARDINAL *in scarlet robes and the Gentlemen of the Court in black. She takes her place on the throne above the Judges' bench; the latter rise and remove their caps at her entrance. The* CARDINAL *sits beside the* DUCHESS, *but on a slightly lower level. The Courtiers group themselves about the throne.*]

SECOND BURGHER. The poor Duchess, how white she looks! Is she going to sit on the throne?

FIRST BURGHER. Yea, now she doth take the Duke's place.

SECOND BURGHER. 'Tis a right good thing for Padua; the Duchess is a kind-hearted, merciful Lady — once she cured my child of a fever.

THIRD BURGHER. Yea, and more than that; she hath given us bread. That should not be forgot to her credit.

A SOLDIER. Stand back there, good folk!

SECOND BURGHER. Why need we to stand back, if we be good folk?

USHER. Silence in the court!

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. With your Grace's leave, an it please you, we will deal with the Duke's murder. [*The* DUCHESS *bows assent.*] Let the prisoner step forward! What is thy name?

GUIDO. What matters that, my Lord?

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. Guido Ferranti they call thee in Padua.

GUIDO. A man can die under that name as well as another.

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. 'Tis well known to thee what aweful crime they charge thee with, — most traitorous murder done on our Duke, Simone Gesso, Lord of Padua. What defence hast thou to offer?

GUIDO. None.

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. Then dost thou make confession of guilt?

GUIDO. Nay, I do confess naught, and I deny naught. I pray you, worshipful sir, proceed as fast as e'er the use of justice and the law permit. I will render no explanations.

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. Then canst thou not be guiltless of the murder; rather hath thy hardened, contumacious heart shut fast its gates against the right. Never think thy silence will avail thee; on the contrary it doth but magnify thy guilt, whereof we have been all along fully convinced. Now once more, I bid thee speak.

GUIDO. I will not speak.

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. Then naught is left for me to do but speedily to pronounce on thee the doom of death.

GUIDO. I beseech you, say out your judgement quick. You can confer on me no more longed for boon.

CHIEF JUSTICIAR [*Rising*]. Guido Ferranti —

MORANZONE [*Advancing from among the crowd*]. Stay, stay, Sir Justiciar!

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. Who art thou that bidst justice stay?

MORANZONE. An it be justice, let it take its course; But an it be not —

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. Who is this?

BARDI. A Noble, and well known to our whilome Duke.

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. Well, Sir, you have come opportunely to be satisfied anent our Duke's murder. There stands the man who did the hideous deed.

MORANZONE. Hath mere suspicion fastened blindly on him, or have you proofs he was the man?

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. Thrice over hath the Court summoned him to say his say; but guilt lies heavy on his tongue, for not a word doth he advance in vindication, nor seeks to clear himself of blame, which surely innocence would have done.

MORANZONE. A second time I ask the question, — have you proofs?

CHIEF JUSTICIAR [*Showing the dagger*]. This dagger, which the soldiers last night tore all bloody from his blood-stained hands. Need we better proof?

MORANZONE [*Takes the dagger and approaches the* DUCHESS]. Have I not seen a dagger much like this hanging at your Grace's girdle? [*The* DUCHESS *shudders, but without answering.*] Let me converse with this youth, who is in such peril of his life, for a few moments.

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. With much pleasure, Sir! And may you bring him to a frame of mind when he will unburden his heart of its load of guilt. [MORANZONE *goes over to* GUIDO, *and takes his hand.*]

MORANZONE [*Whispers*]. She did it! I could see it in

her eyes! Canst think that I should suffer thy father's son to be dragged to the scaffold by this woman? Even as her Consort sold thy father, will she now do with thee,

GUIDO. Count Moranzone, I did it, and I alone. You may rest content, my father is avenged.

MORANZONE. Enough, enough, I know thou didst not do it; else had thy father's dagger, not this woman's plaything, fulfilled the work. Look, how she gazes at us! By God, the marble mask shall down; before all the world will I arraign her for this murder.

GUIDO. You must never do so.

MORANZONE. Be sure of this, I will.

GUIDO. Better say no word of it, my Lord.

MORANZONE. Why not? An she be guiltless, she can prove it; if guilty, she must die.

GUIDO. And what am I to do?

MORANZONE. Thou or I — one of us twain is to tell the truth here and now.

GUIDO. The truth is, — I did the deed.

MORANZONE. We will see what our good Duchess answers.

GUIDO. Nay, I will tell all right out.

MORANZONE. 'Tis well said, Guido. On her own head fall the consequences of her outrage, not on thine! Did she not deliver thee to the guard?

GUIDO. Yea, she did.

MORANZONE. Well then, avenge thy father's death on her! She was wife of the false Judas!

GUIDO. Yea, she was!

MORANZONE. Now, methinks, no further urging is needed, albeit yesterday thou wast childishly discouraged and faint-hearted.

GUIDO. Faint-hearted though I was yesterday, I will no more be so to-day, be sure of that.

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. Doth he confess?

GUIDO. My Lord, I will confess, — that a cruel murder hath been committed.

FIRST BURGHER. Now, look at that; he hath a gentle heart and will know naught o' murder; so they will let him go free anon.

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. And that is all?

GUIDO. Nay, I say more than that, — I say, the man doth mortal sin who sheds man's blood.

SECOND BURGHER. He should go say that to the headsman; 'tis a good word.

GUIDO. Last boon of all, I do beseech the Court to grant me leave frankly to expound the riddle of the murder, lighten this darkness, and name the guilty one who yesternight slew the Duke with this dagger.

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. The boon is granted.

BEATRICE [*Rising*]. Nay, nay, he must not speak; need we any further proofs? Was he not seized at night within the Palace in the bloody garb of guilt?

CHIEF JUSTICIAR [*Showing her the Code*]. Your Grace may look yourself how the Law doth stand.

BEATRICE [*Pushing the book away*]. Bethink you, Sir Justiciar, is it not most likely a man of his sort might here in presence of all the people defame and vilify my late Consort, the City, the City's honour, mayhap even mine own self?

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. But the Law, your Grace!

BEATRICE. He must not speak; but with a gag in his mouth climb the ladder to the headsman's block.

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. But the Law!

BEATRICE. No Law binds us, 'tis we bind others by the Law.

MORANZONE. Sir Justiciar, you will never suffer such injustice here.

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. Nay, spare your reproaches, Count Moranzone. 'Twere sure a bad ensample, noble Lady,

to turn away the Law from the right path; by such arbitrary power anarchy might well creep in to disturb our golden-balanced mean, and wrong win unrighteous victory.

BARDI. Your Grace cannot hinder the course of Justice.

BEATRICE. You preach of Justice and brag of the Law! Methinks, ye proud lords of Padua, the man who hurts your goods or pockets, who would but minish your monstrous incomings by the worth of one poor ferry toll, you would be far enow from giving *him* the benefit of the tardy Law's delay, with the same gentle patience ye do recommend to me.

BARDI. Your Grace doth wrong the Nobles.

BEATRICE. Nay, methinks I do not. Which of you all, an he found a thief at night in his house, stowing away some worthless trash amid his rags, would enter on discussions, and not call in a constable out of hand, to hale him straight to gaol?

So would ye, finding the villain with my husband's blood upon his hands, have haled him before his judge, that his head might be struck off.

GUIDO. God!

BEATRICE. Sir Justiciar, speak!

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. It may not be, your Grace. The laws of Padua are strict upon the point: even a common murderer hath the right thereafter to plead his case with his own mouth.

MORANZONE. Oh righteous Judge! Oh righteous law!

BEATRICE. Now are ye making triumph all too soon with your Law and Right! This is no ordinary, baseborn murderer, Justiciar, but a bold outlaw, a traitor to the State, caught in open rebellion. The man who murders the Ruler of the State, murders the State as well, doth make all women widows, and all children orphans; so is he the public enemy of the State, as much as though he

came with menacing artillery, in league with the hostile levies of Venice, and rattled at the gates of our Stronghold. Nay, more perilous is he to the State than serried spears and thundering cannon; for walls, gates, battlements, bastions, and all such things as are wrought of mere brute wood and stone, can be built up anew. But who can raise up again the body of my dead Consort, and bid him live and laugh?

MAFFIO. By Saint Paul, they will surely, I ween, forbid him the right to speak.

JEPPO. Yea, she hath gotten him fast hand and foot. But listen what more she hath to say.

BEATRICE. Wherefore bestrew ye now Padua's head with ashes, hang mourning banners out in all her streets, let every citizen go clad in sober black, — but ere we make us ready for the funeral feast, we must bethink us of the accursed murderer's hand, that hath wrought ruin on our State. Away with him straight to yon narrow house, whence no sound returns, where with a pinch of dust Death stops the lying mouths of men.

GUIDO. Let go there, constables. Hear me, Justiciar! Thou canst as little check the fetterless Ocean, the winter whirlwind, the Alpine hurricane, as silence me. Yea, should your soldiers drive their swords into my throat, yet shall each wound's gaping mouth with furious tongue cry out to Heaven.

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. Violence of this sort doth naught avail; so long as the tribunal grants thee not legitimate authority of free speech, thy words be but spoken to the winds. [*The* DUCHESS *smiles*, GUIDO *falls back with a despairing look.*]

Now, your Grace, I and these wise Justicers do propose with your good leave to withdraw us into another chamber, and there consider this hard case of law, and examine statutes and precedents.

BEATRICE. Go, worthy Justiciar, search the statute well, and be not at the beck and call of the slandering knave.

MORANZONE. Go, worthy Justiciar, search your own conscience, and send no man to death unheard.

[*Exeunt* CHIEF JUSTICIAR *and colleagues.*]

BEATRICE. Hold thy peace, thou evil genius of my life; for the second time thou com'st betwixt us. This time, I ween, Sir, 'tis my turn.

GUIDO. I will not die till I have spoken out.

BEATRICE. Die, and take thy secret along with thee to the grave!

GUIDO. Art still that same Duchess of Padua?

BEATRICE. I am what thou hast made me; look and see, I am thy creature.

MAFFIO. Look'ye, is she not like the white tigress at Venice an Indian Sultan once sent the Doge?

JEPPO. Hist, she can hear thy babble.

EXECUTIONER. My lad, I know not what thy speaking can effect, now mine axe is come so nigh thy neck; no words can blunt its edge. But seeing it doth concern thee so nearly, I will hie me yonder to the Churchman; the commoner folks aye call him hither. I know of a surety, he hath a kind heart.

GUIDO. He whose trade is death is courtlier than all the rest.

EXECUTIONER. God have mercy on thee, I do thee the last service on earth.

GUIDO. Sir Cardinal, in a Christian land, where the pitying face of the Redeemer looks down from the high seat of justice, shall a human being die without confession? If not, then let me reveal the nightmare of my sins, so far as sin doth burden my soul.

BEATRICE. A needless waste of time.

CARDINAL. Ah, my son, I have no influence over the

Justiciar. *Mine* office only begins when doom hath been pronounced, to stir the wavering sinner to repentance, that he may whisper in the ear of Holy Church the secrets of a sin-laden heart.

BEATRICE. As much as e'er thou wilt, may'st speak at the confessional, till thy lips be outwearied, but here thou shalt not so.

GUIDO. Reverent Father, you do bring me but weak consolation.

CARDINAL. Nay, my son, the strong power of the Church doth not end with this poor soap-bubble world, whereof we, saith St. Jerome, are but dust — for, an if the sinner die repentant, prayer and our holy masses may do much to rescue his soul from Purgatory.

BEATRICE. An thou dost meet my husband in Purgatory with a blood-red star over his heart, tell him I send you to bear him company.

GUIDO. Oh God!

MORANZONE. This is the woman thou didst love, is't not?

CARDINAL. How cruel is Your Grace toward this man!

BEATRICE. Not half so cruel as he was to *your* Grace.

CARDINAL. Yea truly, he did to death your Consort.

BEATRICE. He did indeed!

CARDINAL. But mercy is the noblest prerogative of Princes.

BEATRICE. I found no mercy, and I give none. . . . He hath turned my heart into a stone, sowed nettle spawn in the flowering mead, poisoned the wellspring of compassion in my heart, and torn up loving-kindness by the roots; my life is like a land of famine, wherefrom all good things are utterly digged up. I am what thou hast made me. [*The* DUCHESS *weeps.*]

JEPPO. Strange she should so have loved the wicked Duke.

MAFFIO. Strange 'tis women love their mates, and strange it is they love them not.

JEPPO. What a philosopher art thou, Petrucci!

MAFFIO. Why yes, I can bear with equanimity the ill-luck of other folks, — and that is philosophy.

BEATRICE. They tarry long, the greybeards, in debate, bid them come, bid them come quick, else my heart will burst, so fiercely doth it beat; not that I am so exceeding anxious to live, for God wot, my life is not so joyful, — but at any rate I fain would not die without companions, nor fare alone to hell.

Sir Cardinal, canst not here on my brow read a word writ in scarlet letters, — the word 'Revenge.' . . . Bring water that I wash it out; it was branded there yesternight — say, must I wear it there by day, Cardinal? Oh, how it burns, and doth consume my brain! Give me a knife, — no, not that one, another, — that I may cut it out.

CARDINAL. It is but natural to rage against the murderous hand of the malefactor who struck dead your husband in his sleep.

BEATRICE. Ah, Cardinal, would I could burn that hand off, — it will burn in the world to come.

CARDINAL. Our Holy Church bids us forgive our enemies.

BEATRICE. Forgive? what is that? there was no forgiveness ever for me. Ha, they come at last. Well, Sir Justiciar, well?

[*The* CHIEF JUSTICIAR *enters.*]

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. Revered and most exalted our Liege Lady, long have we examined the knotty point, and well pondered Your Grace's words of wisdom, — never wisdom spake from fairer lips.

BEATRICE. Get on, my Lord, and let be compliments!

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. We find, as duly demonstrated to Your Grace, that whosoever, whether by force or fraud,

doth conspire against the person of the Prince, is *ipso facto* outlawed and void of all rights which appertain to other men, is a traitor and an enemy of the people, whom any sword may slay at will, without its wielder being called into account; but an if he be brought before the judgment seat, he must with dumb lips and all humility submit him to his well-deserved fate, seeing he hath forfeited the right of free speech.

BEATRICE. I thank thee from my heart, your law doth please me well. And so, I beg, finish with the assassin, as is meet for him; for I am weary of waiting, and the headsman is weary too. What, is there aught more?

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. Yea, Your Grace, one thing more. The man is a foreigner, no Paduan, and owes no fealty to our Duke, more than Nature claims of everyone. He may be accused of manifold treasons, whereof the penalty is certain death, yet hath he right of free speech in open session 'fore the people; nay, the Court will urgently call on him, in accord with proper precedent, to defend his life, to the end his City may not, justly incensed, charge unjust judgment 'gainst our State, whereby a War might well be brought upon us. So ruthful are Padua's laws toward the stranger that sojourneth within her walls!

BEATRICE. Is he, as member of our Household, a stranger in the city?

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. Only when he hath served seven years here, can he become a citizen of Padua.

GUIDO. I thank thee from my heart, your law doth please me well.

SECOND BURGHER. Law, I like not Law; an there were no Law, would be no transgressors o' the Law, and folk would live virtuous.

FIRST BURGHER. Yea, verily, that is a wise word, it carries a man far.

USHER. Yea, to the gallows, rascal!

BEATRICE. Is this the law?

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. Verily 'tis the Law of the Land, noble Lady.

BEATRICE. Show me the book; yea, there it stands in blood-red characters.

JEPPO. Look at our Duchess!

BEATRICE. Accursed law, ah, could I but tear thee from the code of state, as now I tear thee from this book. [*Tears the leaf out.*] Count Bardi, prithee, a word! Are you loyal? Then get me a horse, have it in waiting at my door, for I must ride in hot haste to Venice.

BARDI. You are for Venice, Duchess?

BEATRICE. Say naught of it! Go, go speedily.

[*Exit* BARDI.]

A word more, Sir Justiciar. If, as thou say'st, this is law in Padua, — and of the rightness of thy judgment I raise no doubt, albeit right in such a case is bitter wrong, — yet can I not, by virtue of mine office, adjourn this trial to a later time?

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. A blood process can never be postponed.

BEATRICE. I will not stay to hearken to the fellow insulting me with his rough answers. Beside, all important duties do await at the Palace. Attend me, gentlemen!

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. Noble Lady, you may not depart hence, until the accused is condemned or acquitted.

BEATRICE. *May* not, Sir Justiciar! Pray, by what right dost put obstacles in my way? Am I not Mistress here in Padua, Liege Lady of the State?

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. On this ground, — seeing you are source and fount of life and eke of death, wherefrom Right doth flow like a mighty river, Right is dried up, an you be not present, and hath no proper existence; therefore must you remain.

BEATRICE. Thou wouldst keep me here against my will.

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. Let not your will go against the Law.

BEATRICE. And if I force my way from out the Court?

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. You cannot force the Justicers to clear the way.

BEATRICE. I will not stay. [*Rises from her seat.*]

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. Is the Doorkeeper there? Let him step forward. [*Doorkeeper comes forward*]. Thou knowest what doth belong to thine office! [*The Doorkeeper shuts the doors of the Hall of Justice, which are to left of stage, and kneels down, as the* DUCHESS *and her train approach.*]

DOORKEEPER. In all humility I do beseech Your Grace, let not the doing of my duty become discourtesy, my unwelcome office be made a grievous burden. By virtue of the right that maketh you a Princess I stand here; were I to break the law, Your Grace, I should be breaking your commandment and not my own.

BEATRICE. Is none amongst you, most honourable Sirs, will toss this prating windbag from my path?

MAFFIO [*Drawing his sword*]. I will!

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. Count Maffio, be heedful what you do, [*to* JEPPO] and you too, my Lord; the first man that draws his sword, were't only against a constable, dies before night.

BEATRICE. Put up your swords, gentlemen; I am resolved to hear the man. [*Goes back to the throne.*]

MAFFIO. Well, thou hast got thine enemy in thy clutches now.

CHIEF JUSTICIAR [*Taking up the hour-glass*]. Guido Ferranti, whiles here the sand runs in this hour-glass, 'tis allowed thee to speak freely, but no longer.

GUIDO. It is long enow.

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. Thou standest at the very extremest verge of death; by thy salvation, speak only the plain, undiluted truth. Naught else will stead thee.

GUIDO. An I speak untruth, deliver thou my body to the headsman.

CHIEF JUSTICIAR [*Turning the hour-glass*]. Silence all, whiles the prisoner speaks.

USHER. Ho there, silence in the Court!

GUIDO. My Lord Justiciar, revered Judge of this high Court, scarce know I how to begin what I have to say, so strange and horrible seems the tale to me. First, let me declare mine origin and birth. I am the bold Lorenzo's son, the Duke, who with hideous treachery was bewrayed by a villain, — whilome Duke in this same town of Padua.

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. Beware, 'twill help thee naught to defame the Prince who now lies in his coffin.

MAFFIO. By Saint James, why he is hereditary Lord then of Parma.

JEPPO. I aye took him to be noble born.

GUIDO. I do confess that, with a view to righteous revenge, most righteous revenge upon a murderer, I took service at the Duke's Court, sat with him at meat, drank of his wine and was his boon-companion; so much I do confess, — only this further, that I held my hand till he gave into my keeping the dearest secrets of his life, till he clung to me and in all ways trusted me, as once my noble father trusted him. I held my hand until — [*To the headsman.*] Thou man of blood, turn not thine axe toward me before the time; who knows whether my death-hour be really come. Is mine the only neck among folk present here?

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. Swift runs the sand in the hour-glass, be quick and tell us of the Duke's murder.

GUIDO. To be brief: yesternight 'twas midnight when I scaled the Palace walls with a stout rope, bent on avenging my father's murderer; such was my purpose, I do own it, Sir. Thus much will I confess, and this to boot: when cautiously I had climbed the steps that lead to the Duke's

sleeping-room, and was stretching forth my hand to the scarlet curtain, that shook and shuddered in the storm, just then the white moon shone out in the sky and flooded the dark chamber with a silver sheen, the night lit up its tapers for my service. Asleep lay the hated Duke, still cursing in his dreams, and at the thought of my fathers' slaying, — my father whom he bartered to the block, sold to the scaffold, I pierced the traitor's heart with this dagger here, which by mere chance I found there in the room.

BEATRICE [*Springing up*]. Oh!

GUIDO [*Speaking fast and excitedly*]. I stabbed the Duke. Now, Justiciar, an I may yet crave one boon, let me see the sun never more, when he shines upon the misery of this sorrowful world.

CHIEF JUSTICIAR. Thy wish be granted thee. Die to-night! Lead him forth! Come ye with me, Sirs!

[GUIDO *is led off; as he goes, the* DUCHESS *throws wide her arms and rushes across the stage towards him.*]

BEATRICE. Guido! Guido! [*Falls in a swoon.*]

END OF ACT IV

FIFTH ACT

ACT V

A Dungeon in the State Prison at Padua

GUIDO *lies (left) on a camp bed; beside him a table and on it a beaker. Five solders are drinking and dicing at a stone table in the corner; one of them has a lantern hanging from his halberd. A torch is stuck in the wall, above* GUIDO'S *head. In background two barred windows, and between them (middle) the door, all opening onto a passage without. Stage dimly lighted.*

FIRST SOLDIER [*Throwing the dice*]. Six, six again, Pietro lad!

SECOND SOLDIER. Deuce and all, Lieutenant, I'll play no more with thee; else shall I lose all I have.

THIRD SOLDIER. All but thy wits; need'st have no fear about them.

SECOND SOLDIER. He can't rob me o' my wits.

THIRD SOLDIER. Nay, because thou hast none to lose.

SOLDIERS [*Laughing loudly*]. Ha! ha! ha!

FIRST SOLDIER. Hist, ye will wake the prisoner, he's asleep.

SECOND SOLDIER. What matter? He'll sleep long and sound enow, once he's buried. My word on't, he'd be glad if only we *could* wake him, when he's laid i' the grave.

THIRD SOLDIER. Not he, for when he wakes up there, 'tis the last day come.

SECOND SOLDIER. Yea, he hath brought himself to a pretty pass truly; why, let me tell ye, — to kill one of us, who be mere flesh and blood, is against orders, but to slay a Duke, that is against the laws.

FIRST SOLDIER. But he was a cursed bad Duke.

SECOND SOLDIER. Then should he have had no truck with him; the man who goes with bad folk, runs risk of being fouled with their badness.

THIRD SOLDIER. Why, o' course he doth. How old is the prisoner?

SECOND SOLDIER. Old enow to commit follies, and not old enow to be wise and sensible.

FIRST SOLDIER. He can be any age at that rate.

SECOND SOLDIER. They say the Duchess would fain reprieve him.

FIRST SOLDIER. Truly?

SECOND SOLDIER. Yea, it seems she appealed to the Chief Justiciar, but he refused.

FIRST SOLDIER. But I alway thought, Pietro, the Duchess could do anything.

SECOND SOLDIER. For sure, — why, look'ye how she's made; I don't know a finer woman.

SOLDIERS. Ha! ha! ha!

FIRST SOLDIER. I meant that our Duchess could order anything and have it done.

SECOND SOLDIER. Not so; for now he's delivered up to his Judges, and they will take good care to see him executed, they and Big Hugo, the headsman. But once his head's off, then the Duchess can pardon him, an it suits her fancy; there's no law to hinder that.

FIRST SOLDIER. I don't suppose after all that Big Hugo, as ye call him, when the last comes to the last, will get the chance to do his duty on him; this Guido comes of a noble house, so the laws allow him to take poison, an such be his pleasure.

THIRD SOLDIER. 'Pon honour, drinking poison is a sorry sort o' pleasure.

SECOND SOLDIER. What kind o' a thing is this poison, eh?

FIRST SOLDIER. Why, poison, man, that kills ye dead.

SECOND SOLDIER. What sort o' thing is't exactly, poison?

FIRST SOLDIER. A drink, like water, only not quite so wholesome. Would'st like to taste and try, there's some i' the beaker yonder.

SECOND SOLDIER. 'Zounds, an it be not wholesome, I'll not touch it.

THIRD SOLDIER. Now, an he won't drink it?

FIRST SOLDIER. Then they'll put him to death.

THIRD SOLDIER. But an he do drink it?

FIRST SOLDIER. Then will he die.

SECOND SOLDIER. A damned poor choice for him; well, 'tis to be hoped he'll make a wise one.

[*Knocking heard at the door.*]

FIRST SOLDIER. Go see, who 'tis.

[*Third soldier goes and looks through the judas.*]

THIRD SOLDIER. A woman.

FIRST SOLDIER. Is she a trim wench?

THIRD SOLDIER. I can't see, Lieutenant, she wears a mask.

FIRST SOLDIER. Only right fair or downright ugly women hide their faces. Let her come in! [*The soldier opens the door and the* DUCHESS *enters, masked and cloaked.*]

BEATRICE [*To the third soldier*]. Are you the Officer on guard?

FIRST SOLDIER [*Stepping forward*]. I am, noble Lady.

BEATRICE. I must speak alone with the prisoner.

FIRST SOLDIER. Alas! that is impossible. [*The* DUCHESS *hands him a ring, he looks at it and returns it with a bow; then orders the men*] Withdraw!

[*Exeunt the other soldiers.*]

BEATRICE. Your men are a trifle rough, Sir Officer.

FIRST SOLDIER. They mean no harm.

BEATRICE. In a few minutes I shall be coming again;

as I go down the corridor then, see they do not lift my mask.

FIRST SOLDIER. You need have no fear, noble Lady.

BEATRICE. I have especial reasons for wishing no one to see my face.

FIRST SOLDIER. With this ring, noble Lady, you may go in and out at your good pleasure: 'tis the Duchess's ring.

BEATRICE. Now leave us alone. [*Just as the Officer is on the point of going*] One moment more. For what hour is the execution fixed?

FIRST SOLDIER. At twelve o'clock, noble Lady, we are to lead him forth according to orders, but he will scarce surely wait for us; in all likelihood he will take a sip of the poison before then. Men are sore afraid of the headsman.

BEATRICE. Is that poison there?

FIRST SOLDIER. Yea, noble Lady, very powerful poison.

BETARICE. Now, prithee go.

FIRST SOLDIER. 'Zounds, what a lovely hand! Who may she be, I wonder? Mayhap a woman who hath loved him. [*Exit.*]

BEATRICE [*Removing her mask*]. At last! Now can he easily escape, cloaked and masked; we are almost of a size, no one will recognise him. Mine own fate I care little for. So long as he doth not curse me, albeit he forsake me, all is well; but will he curse me? he hath every right to. 'Tis eleven now, they come not ere twelve; what will they say, when they see the nest empty? [*Walks to the table.*] So that is poison. How wonderful that here in this liquor lies the key of all life's wisdom! [*Takes up the beaker.*] It smells of poppies; how well do I remember, when I was a child in Sicily, I plucked a wealth of scarlet poppies in the corn, and wove a garland of them; even mine uncle, the grim John of Naples, laughed. I knew not that poppy juice can choke the source of life, can stop its pulse and freeze the blood, till men come and hale off

the poor corpse and cast it in the grave, — yea, the dead body, but the soul fares either to heaven or hell. Whither will mine go?

[*Takes the torch from the wall, and goes up to the pallet bed.*]

How soft he sleeps, like a boy outwearied with play. Ah, would that I could sleep so peacefully, but I dream deams. [*Bending over him.*] Poor lad, shall I kiss him? No, my lips would scorch him, sick and sorry as he is of love. But his white neck shall surely 'scape the headsman; that I have provided for. This night he shall fly from Padua, — and therefore I am glad. You are right cunning, Sir Justiciar, but you are not half so cunning as I, — and therefore I am glad. Oh God, how I loved him, and what a bloody flower hath blossomed therefrom. [*Returns to the table.*] Now, shall I drink this liquor, and so make an end? Were it not better to wait till Death come to find me in my bed with his horrid following, — remorse, disease, eld and affliction? I know not an there be much pain to suffer. . . . I am so young, so young, to go to my death now, yet it must needs be so. But why? why die? To-night he doth escape, so that his blood falls not upon my head. Nay, nay, I must die, I am laden with guilt, and therefore must I die; he loves me not, and therefore must I die; I had died happier, an he had kissed me, but that he will not do. Little I knew him; I deemed he would have denounced me to the Judge; we women never know our dearest, till they forsake us.

[*Bell begins to toll.*] Hateful bell, why dost thou cry like a brazen-mouthed bloodhound hungering after his life; hush, thou dost cry in vain. He stirs, — quick! [*Seizes the beaker.*] Oh love, love, love, I never thought to pledge thee so.

[*Drinks the poison and puts down the beaker behind her on the table. The noise awakens* GUIDO; *he starts up, but*

does not see what she has done. Silence reigns for a minute, while they gaze at each other.]

I am not come to crave for pardon now, I know I stand outside of all forgiveness, a guilty, an accursed woman! Enough! I have confessed already to the Justicers the exceeding burden of my sins. They would not listen to me. Some said, I had invented the tale to save thee, since thou wast in league with me; others, that women played with pity as they did with men; others again, that grief for my husband had robbed me of my senses. They would not hear me, and when I swore on the Book, I was sent to the physician. Ten against one; ten they are, thy life is in their power. Folk call me Duchess of Padua, though whether I be so still, I cannot tell. I have pardoned thee, and they have reversed my act, declaring 'tis treason what I have decreed, — mayhap it is. In an hour they will be here to hale thee from thy cell and bind thy hands behind thy back and drag thee to the block, — I have forerun them. Here is the signet-ring of Padua, it will bring thee safe past the watch; now take mask and cloak, they have orders to ask no questions. Once through the prison doors, turn to the left, and at the second bridge horses await thee — at morn thou shalt be at Venice. [*A pause.*] Thou wilt not speak, wilt not once curse me, ere thou goest? Thou hast good right to.

Dost not comprehend that 'twixt thee and the scaffold scarce so much sand in the hour-glass is left to run as a child's fist holds. Here is the ring, the hand is clean; no blood cleaves to it. Have no fear! Wilt thou not take the ring?

GUIDO [*Takes it and kisses it*]. Willingly, noble Lady.

BEATRICE. And leave Padua?

GUIDO. How, leave Padua?

BEATRICE. This very night.

GUIDO. This very night?

BEATRICE. Thank thy God therefor.

GUIDO. Then I may live. Ne'er did life seem so alluring to me as now.

BEATRICE. Why dost delay, my Guido? Here is the cloak, at the bridge a horse, — at the toll-house yonder by the second bridge. Why wilt thou linger here? Can thine ear not catch the dreadful bell, which at each stroke shortens thy young life yet another minute? Fly, fly quickly!

GUIDO. He comes not speedily enough.

BEATRICE. Who?

GUIDO [*Calmly*]. Why, the headsman!

BEATRICE. Nay, nay, say not that.

GUIDO. He alone can bring me out of Padua.

BEATRICE. What, thou dar'st, dar'st burden my overburdened soul with two dead men; one, one is enough! For when I stand before my God eye to eye, thou must not, thou shalt not, with a red thread about thy white neck, step forward and accuse me, so that the very devils that howl in hell should pity me. Wilt thou be harder-hearted than the devils God banishes from heaven!

GUIDO. I stay here, noble Lady.

BEATRICE. Nay, nay, thou canst not. Dost not understand I have less power now in Padua than any girl. They will kill me. I have just seen the scaffold in the open Square; already the rabble was pressing round it with cruel jests and lust of horrors, as though it were the stage of some masquerade and not the melancholy throne of death. Oh Guido, thou must fly.

GUIDO. Yea, by the hand of death, but not by thine.

BEATRICE. Oh, thou art pitiless, as pitiless now as alway. Nay, Guido, thou must away.

GUIDO. I shall remain, noble Lady.

BEATRICE. Thou must not, Guido, it would be so dreadful else, that e'en the stars, amazed and horrified,

would fall from heaven, that the moon would be stopped and darkened in her path, and the sun cease to shine upon the earth that saw thy death.

GUIDO. I will not give way.

BEATRICE [*Wringing her hands*]. Thou dost not know this, that once the Justicers are come, I am powerless to shield thee from the axe. As if I had not done outrage enow already! Will one sin not suffice? Must it engender yet another sin worse than the first crime? Oh God, shut up the womb that mothers sin, dry it up, and never more shall blood stain my hand, as it did but now.

GUIDO [*Taking her hand*]. How, am I fallen so low, I should begrudge to die for thee?

BEATRICE [*Drawing away her hand*]. For me? My life is a worthless thing, that hath been tossed out into the street mud of the world. Thou must not die for me, thou shalt not, Guido; I am a sinful woman.

GUIDO. Let them who know not what temptation is, let them who have not walked like us in the furnace-fire of passion, and whose life is tedious and colourless, in a word all them, if such there be, who have never loved, let them cast stones at us.

BEATRICE. Woe is me, ah woe is me!

GUIDO [*Throwing himself at her feet*]. Thou art my life, my highest, truest joy! Oh golden hair, oh purple mouth, oh cheeks framed to allure man's love! Incarnate image of loveliness! To thee doing homage, I forget all that hath been; to thee doing homage, my soul touches thine; to thee doing homage, I feel myself a God. Albeit my body come to the headsman's block, yet doth my love live for aye.

[*The* DUCHESS *holds her hands before her face,* GUIDO *draws them away.*] Lift the drooping curtains of thine eyes, that I may look in them and say, — I love thee, and never more than when Death presses his cold lips betwixt

us. I love thee, Beatrice, — thine answer? Woe is me! I can well endure the headsman, but not this silence; say thou lovest me. This one word, and Death hath no sting left; but an thou say it not, fifty thousand deaths are then a mercy. Thou art cruel, thou dost not love me.

BEATRICE. I have no right to. Love's hands of innocence are stained with blood vilely shed, — here on the ground is blood, sprinkled there by me.

GUIDO. Nay, love, not by thee; only a devil tempted thee.

BEATRICE [*Springing up*]. No, no, each one is his own devil, and himself turns the world into a hell.

GUIDO. Then sink Paradise to Tartarus! For now I hold this world a heaven a brief while. I love thee, Beatrice.

BEATRICE. Tainted with the plague of sin, I am not worthy of thee.

GUIDO. By the Redeemer, the sin was mine, if sin there were. I nurtured murder in my heart, sweetened my meat therewith, flavoured my wine, in thought I struck down the accursed Duke an hundred times a day. Had the man died only half so often as I wished, Death would have been stalking for ever through the house, Murder would have never rested. But thou, Beloved, thou who looked with ruth upon the whipped hound, thou at whose gaze children's faces brightened, because where thou didst pass, sunshine went with thee, thou gentle angel of white, holy purity, what was it men call thy sin?

BEATRICE. What was it? Oft it seems to me a dream, an evil dream sent by an evil demon; but then, I see the corpse within its coffin, and know it is no dream, know that my hand is red with blood; and my poor soul, on the voyage to a love's haven 'gainst the wild tempest of this mad world, hath wrecked her bark on the rock of sin.

What was it, thou dost ask, — only a murder, naught else but murder, horrid murder.

GUIDO. Nay, never, never; 'twas but the painful blossom of thy love, that in a moment burst into bloom, and in a moment's passion bare a bloody fruit, such as in thought myself had plucked a thousand times. My mind was full of murder, but my arm was weak; thy arm committed murder, but thy mind was innocent. I love thee for it, Beatrice; who refuses pity for thy distress, may he find no compassion in Heaven. Kiss me, sweet!

[*Tries to kiss her.*]

BEATRICE. Nay, nay, thy mouth is pure, mine sullied; my paramour was murder, and sin slept in my bed. Guido, an thou lov'st me, fly, fly; for every moment gnaws at thy life like a deadly worm. Beloved, fly, and if in later days thou dost remember me, think of me as of one who loved thee better than all else in the world; as of a woman, Guido mine, who was fain to offer up her life for her love, and thereby slew her love. — What is't now? the bell hath fallen dumb, and up the stairs I hear the tread of armed men coming.

GUIDO [*Aside*]. The signal for the watch to hale me forth.

BEATRICE. Why hath it stopped ringing?

GUIDO. Must thou know? For this side the grave, my life ends here, — beyond the tomb we shall see each other again.

BEATRICE. It is not yet too late; fly hence, the horse stands ready by the bridge, there yet is time. Away, away, thou must not tarry longer.

[*Noise of soldiers in the corridor.*]

A VOICE FROM WITHOUT. Make way for the Chief Justiciar of Padua!

[*Through the barred window the Chief Justiciar is seen passing along the passage, torch-bearers preceding him.*]

BEATRICE. It is too late.

A VOICE FROM WITHOUT. Make way for the Headsman!

BEATRICE [*Throwing herself down*]. Oh!

[*The Executioner, axe on shoulder, appears in the corridor, Monks carrying tapers behind him.*]

GUIDO. Farewell, my love, I drink the poison here. I fear not the headsman; only this, I will not die upon the block.

BEATRICE. Oh!

GUIDO. Nay, rather here, here in thy arms, betwixt two kisses, — farewell! [*Goes to the table, and seizes the cup.*] What, art empty? [*Tosses it on the floor.*] Oh niggardly gaoler, thou dost begrudge even thy poison.

BEATRICE [*In a weak voice*]. No blame belongs to him.

GUIDO. Oh God, hast thou drunk it, Beatrice! tell me, thou hast not done that!

BEATRICE. An I were to lie, there burns a fire at my heart that will soon proclaim the truth.

GUIDO. Traitorous love, why didst leave me never a drop over?

BEATRICE. Nay, nay, there was death only for me in the cup.

GUIDO. Let me taste the dainty poison from thy lips; mayhap some still lingers there.

BEATRICE. Thou art not to die, thou hast shed no blood, thou art not to die; 'tis I have shed blood, and I must die. Stands not the word writ: Blood for blood? Who said so? I cannot remember.

GUIDO. Wait for me, our souls will depart together.

BEATRICE. Nay, live! There be many women left in the world ready for love, not murder, for thy sake.

GUIDO. Thee only do I love.

BEATRICE. That is no good ground for dying.

GUIDO. An if we die together, why cannot we rest together in one tomb?

BEATRICE. The grave is but a narrow marriage bed.

GUIDO. It will suffice for us.

BEATRICE. They shall bedeck it with stiff cere-cloth and bitter herbs; for roses, methinks, spring not in the grave, and if any there be, they are all withered, since the Duke died.

GUIDO. Ah Beatrice, thy mouth wears roses that do defy Death.

BEATRICE. Will not my mouth, whenas we lie in the grave, fall all to dust, thy bright eyes shrink to blind holes, and worms, our marriage-guests, gnaw at thy heart?

GUIDO. What matter? Death doth react on love, — and through love's eternal majesty I die with thee.

BEATRICE. But the grave is dark, the tomb is dark; wherefore must I go first to light the tapers ere thou come. Nay, nay, I will not die, will not die. Beloved, thou art strong, and young and brave! Defend me when the Angel of Death draws near, and wrestle with him for me! [*Pushing* GUIDO *forward.*] I will kiss thee, when thou hast vanquished him. Hast thou no way to stay the poison that doth rage within me? Are there no rivers left in all Italy? Bring me a beaker of water and put out this burning fire!

GUIDO. Oh God!

BEATRICE. Why didst thou never tell me that in Italy all is desert dryness, — no water anywhere, only fire?

GUIDO. Beloved!

BEATRICE. Send for the physician, but not for him who staunched my husband's blood. Fetch a physician instantly! There is for every poison an antidote, he will sell it us for a great price. Tell him, for one short hour of life Padua shall be his guerdon. I will not die. I am sick to death. Touch me not, poison gnaws at my vitals. I never knew it was such pain to die. Life, methought, had taken all the heart's agony for itself. It seems 'tis not so.

GUIDO. Accursed stars, quench ye your torches in tears, and bid your mistress, the moon, to pale her beams to-night.

BEATRICE. What do we here, Beloved? This room is poorly furnished forth for a bridal chamber. Come, let us begone at once. Where are the horses? By now we should be half way to Venice. How cold the night is! Let us ride faster! Are not these our wedding bells, Guido?

[*Outside the Monks begin their chants.*]

Music! It might be merrier; but melancholy is now the fashion, — why I cannot tell. Why dost weep? Do we not love each other? Naught else is needed. Death, what seek'st thou here? Thou wert never asked to this feast; away, thou dost intrude. I tell thee, I drank thy health in wine, and not in poison. They lied who said I had drunk up thy poison; it was spilt on the ground, like my husband's blood, — thou hast come too late.

GUIDO. There's nothing here, sweetheart; these be but unsubstantial phantoms.

BEATRICE. Death, why dost thou tarry here? Go to the upper chamber, there stands prepared for thee the cold meats of my Consort's funeral feast; here 'tis a marriage banquet. Thou hast gone astray. Beside, 'tis summer now, we need not so fierce a fire; thou art scorching us. Guido, bid the sextons have done with digging of this empty grave. I will not be entombed therein. I burn, consume, melt in the inward glow; canst do naught to help me? Water, give me water, but no more poison. — Ha, now the pain is past; how strange, I feel no pain. Death is gone, how glad I am thereof; methought he would fain part us. Tell me this, Guido, art sorry thou didst ever see me?

GUIDO. What had my life been without thee? In this dull, flat world many a man hath died, waiting and wishing for such a moment as this, and never found it.

BEATRICE. Thou art not sorry then? How strange it seems!

GUIDO. Have I not fed mine eyes on beauty? That is joy enow for a man's life. I could jest for very merriment; at many a feast I have sat sadder; who can be sad at such a feast as this, where Death and Love are our cupbearers? We are made one in love and death.

BEATRICE. I have been guilty above all women, and therefore punished above all women. What dost truly think, — 'tis not possible, — can love wipe away the blood from off my hands, pour balsam in my wounds, heal my scars, and wash my scarlet sins as white as snow? I have sinned much.

GUIDO. Who sins for love, sins not.

BEATRICE. I have sinned, and yet mayhap shall I be forgiven. I have loved much.

[*They kiss each other for the first time in this Act. Suddenly the* DUCHESS *springs up in a fearful death spasm, tears at her clothing in her agony, and finally falls back on her seat, her face wrung and distorted with pain.* GUIDO *takes the dagger from her girdle, kills himself with it, then as he falls across her knees, drags down the cloak hanging over the back of the chair, and covers her completely with it. A short pause. Then the trampling of soldiers in the corridor, the door opens, the Chief Justiciar, the Executioner and the Watch enter, and see the black muffled shape and* GUIDO *lying athwart it. The Chief Justiciar rushes forward and draws away the cloak from the* DUCHESS, *whose countenance is now the marble image of Peace, — showing that God has forgiven her.*]

END OF ACT V

VERA; OR, THE NIHILISTS

VERA; OR, THE NIHILISTS

Persons in the Prologue

PETER SABOUROFF (an Innkeeper)
VERA SABOUROFF (his Daughter)
MICHAEL (a Peasant)
COLONEL KOTEMKIN

Scene, Russia. Time — 1795

Persons in the Play

IVAN THE CZAR.
PRINCE PAUL MARALOFFSKI (Prime Minister of Russia).
PRINCE PETROVITCH.
COUNT ROUVALOFF.
MARQUIS DE POIVRARD.
BARON RAFF.
GENERAL KOTEMKIN.
A PAGE.

Nihilists

PETER TCHERNAVITCH, President of the Nihilists.
MICHAEL.
ALEXIS IVANACIEVITCH, known as a Student of Medicine.
PROFESSOR MARFA.
VERA SABOUROFF.

Soldiers, Conspirators, etc.

Scene, Moscow. Time — 1800

PROLOGUE

SCENE — *A Russian Inn. Large door opening on snowy landscape at back of stage.*

PETER SABOUROFF *and* MICHAEL.

PETER [*Warming his hands at a stove*]. Has Vera not come back yet, Michael?

MICH. No, Father Peter, not yet; 'tis a good three miles to the post-office, and she has to milk the cows besides, and that dun one is a rare plaguey creature for a wench to handle.

PETER. Why didn't you go with her, you young fool? she'll never love you unless you are always at her heels; women like to be bothered.

MICH. She says I bother her too much already, Father Peter, and I fear she'll never love me after all.

PETER. Tut, tut, boy, why shouldn't she? you're young and wouldn't be ill-favoured either, had God or thy mother given thee another face. Aren't you one of Prince Maraloffski's game-keepers; and haven't you got a good grass farm, and the best cow in the village? What more does a girl want?

MICH. But Vera, Father Peter —

PETER. Vera, my lad, has got too many ideas; I don't think much of ideas myself; I've got on well enough in life without 'em; why shouldn't my children? There's Dmitri! could have stayed here and kept the inn; many a young lad would have jumped at the offer in these hard times; but he, scattered-brained featherhead of a boy, must needs go off to Moscow to study the law! What

does he want knowing about the law! let a man do his duty, say I, and no one will trouble him.

MICH. Ay! but, Father Peter, they say a good lawyer can break the law as often as he likes, and no one can say him nay.

PETER. That is about all they are good for; and there he stays, and has not written a line to us for four months now — a good son that, eh?

MICH. Come, come, Father Peter, Dmitri's letters must have gone astray — perhaps the new postman can't read; he looks stupid enough, and Dmitri, why, he was the best fellow in the village. Do you remember how he shot the bear at the barn in the great winter?

PETER. Ay, it was a good shot; I never did a better myself.

MICH. And as for dancing, he tired out three fiddlers Christmas come two years.

PETER. Ay, ay, he was a merry lad. It is the girl that has the seriousness — she goes about as solemn as a priest for days at a time.

MICH. Vera is always thinking of others.

PETER. There is her mistake, boy. Let God and our little Father look to the world. It is none of my work to mend my neighbour's thatch. Why, last winter old Michael was frozen to death in his sleigh in the snow-storm, and his wife and children starved afterwards when the hard times came; but what business was it of mine? I didn't make the world. Let God and the Czar look to it. And then the blight came, and the black plague with it, and the priests couldn't bury the people fast enough, and they lay dead on the roads — men and women both. But what business was it of mine? I didn't make the world. Let God and the Czar look to it. Or two autumns ago, when the river overflowed on a sudden, and the children's school was carried away and drowned every girl

and boy in it. I didn't make the world — let God and the Czar look to it.

MICH. But, Father Peter —

PETER. No, no, boy; no man could live if he took his neighbour's pack on his shoulders. [*Enter* VERA *in peasant's dress.*] Well, my girl, you've been long enough away — where is the letter?

VERA. There is none, to-day, Father.

PETER. I knew it.

VERA. But there will be one to-morrow, Father.

PETER. Curse him, for an ungrateful son.

VERA. Oh, Father, don't say that; he must be sick.

PETER. Ay! sick of profligacy, perhaps.

VERA. How dare you say that of him, Father? You know that is not true.

PETER. Where does the money go, then? Michael, listen. I gave Dmitri half his mother's fortune to bring with him to pay the lawyer folk of Moscow. He has only written three times, and every time for more money. He got it, not at my wish, but at hers [*Pointing to* VERA], and now for five months, close on six almost, we have heard nothing from him.

VERA. Father, he will come back.

PETER. Ay! the prodigals always return; but let him never darken my doors again.

VERA [*Sitting down pensive*]. Some evil has come on him; he must be dead! Oh! Michael, I am so wretched about Dmitri.

MICH. Will you never love any one but him, Vera?

VERA [*Smiling*]. I don't know; there is so much else to do in the world but love.

MICH. Nothing else worth doing, Vera.

PETER. What noise is that, Vera? [*A metallic clink is heard.*]

VERA [*Rising and going to the door*]. I don't know,

Father; it is not like the cattle bells, or I would think Nicholas had come from the fair. Oh! Father! it is soldiers! — coming down the hill — there is one of them on horseback. How pretty they look! But there are some men with them with chains on! They must be robbers. Oh! don't let them in, Father; I couldn't look at them.

PETER. Men in chains! Why, we are in luck, my child! I heard this was to be the new road to Siberia, to bring the prisoners to the mines; but I didn't believe it. My fortune is made! Bustle, Vera, bustle! I'll die a rich man after all. There will be no lack of good customers now. An honest man should have the chance of making his living out of rascals now and then.

VERA. Are these men rascals, Father? What have they done?

PETER. I reckon they're some of those Nihilists the priest warns us against. Don't stand there idle, my girl.

VERA. I suppose, then, they are all wicked men.

[*Sound of soldiers outside; cry of "Halt!" enter Russian officer with a body of soldiers and eight men in chains, raggedly dressed; one of them on entering hurriedly puts his coat above his ears and hides his face; some soldiers guard the door, others sit down; the prisoners stand.*]

COLONEL. Innkeeper!

PETER. Yes, Colonel.

COLONEL [*Pointing to Nihilists*]. Give these men some bread and water.

PETER [*To himself*]. I shan't make much out of that order.

COLONEL. As for myself, what have you got fit to eat?

PETER. Some good dried venison, your Excellency — and some rye whisky.

COLONEL. Nothing else?

PETER. Why, more whisky, your Excellency.

COLONEL. What clods these peasants are! You have a better room than this?

PETER. Yes, sir.

COLONEL. Bring me there. Sergeant, post your picket outside, and see that these scoundrels do not communicate with any one. No letter writing, you dogs, or you'll be flogged for it. Now for the venison. [*To* PETER *bowing before him.*] Get out of the way, you fool! Who is that girl? [*Sees* VERA.]

PETER. My daughter, your Highness.

COLONEL. Can she read and write?

PETER. Ay, that she can, sir.

COLONEL. Then she is a dangerous woman. No peasant should be allowed to do anything of the kind. Till your fields, store your harvests, pay your taxes, and obey your masters — that is your duty.

VERA. Who are our masters?

COLONEL. Young woman, these men are going to the mines for life for asking the same foolish question.

VERA. Then they have been unjustly condemned.

PETER. Vera, keep your tongue quiet. She is a foolish girl, sir, who talks too much.

COLONEL. Every woman does talk too much. Come, where is this venison? Count, I am waiting for you. How can you see anything in a girl with coarse hands? [*He passes with* PETER *and his aide-de-camp into an inner room.*]

VERA [*To one of the Nihilists*]. Won't you sit down? you must be tired.

SERGEANT. Come now, young woman, no talking to my prisoners.

VERA. I shall speak to them. How much do you want?

SERGEANT. How much have you?

VERA. Will you let these men sit down if I give you

this? [*Takes off her peasant's necklace.*] It is all I have; it was my mother's.

SERGEANT. Well, it looks pretty enough, and is heavy too. What do you want with these men?

VERA. They are hungry and tired. Let me go to them?

ONE OF THE SOLDIERS. Let the wench be, if she pays us.

SERGEANT. Well, have your way. If the Colonel sees you, you may have to come with us, my pretty one.

VERA [*Advances to the Nihilists*]. Sit down; you must be tired. [*Serves them food.*] What are you?

A PRISONER. Nihilists.

VERA. Who put you in chains?

PRISONER. Our Father the Czar.

VERA. Why?

PRISONER. For loving liberty too well.

VERA [*To prisoner who hides his face*]. What did you want to do?

DMITRI. To give liberty to thirty millions of people enslaved to one man.

VERA [*Startled at the voice*]. What is your name?

DMITRI. I have no name.

VERA. Where are your friends?

DMITRI. I have no friends.

VERA. Let me see your face!

DMITRI. You will see nothing but suffering in it. They have tortured me.

VERA [*Tears the cloak from his face*]. Oh, God! Dmitri! my brother!

DMITRI. Hush! Vera; be calm. You must not let my father know; it would kill him. I thought I could free Russia. I heard men talk of Liberty one night in a café. I had never heard the word before. It seemed to be a new god they spoke of. I joined them. It was there all the money went. Five months ago they seized us. They

found me printing the paper. I am going to the mines for life. I could not write. I thought it would be better to let you think I was dead; for they are bringing me to a living tomb.

VERA [*Looking round*]. You must escape, Dmitri. I will take your place.

DMITRI. Impossible! You can only revenge us.

VERA. I shall revenge you.

DMITRI. Listen! there is a house in Moscow —

SERGEANT. Prisoners, attention! — the Colonel is coming — young woman, your time is up.

[*Enter* COLONEL, AIDE-DE-CAMP *and* PETER.]

PETER. I hope your Highness is pleased with the venison. I shot it myself.

COLONEL. It had been better had you talked less about it. Sergeant, get ready. [*Gives purse to* PETER.] Here, you cheating rascal!

PETER. My fortune is made! long live your Highness. I hope your Highness will come often this way.

COLONEL. By Saint Nicholas, I hope not. It is too cold here for me. [*To* VERA.] Young girl, don't ask questions again about what does not concern you. I will not forget your face.

VERA. Nor I yours, or what you are doing.

COLONEL. You peasants are getting too saucy since you ceased to be serfs, and the knout is the best school for you to learn politics in. Sergeant, proceed.

[*The* COLONEL *turns and goes to top of stage. The prisoners pass out double file; as* DMITRI *passes* VERA *he lets a piece of paper fall on the ground; she puts her foot on it and remains immobile.*]

PETER [*Who has been counting the money the* COLONEL *gave him*]. Long life to your Highness. I will hope to see another batch soon. [*Suddenly catches sight of* DMITRI *as he is going out of the door, and screams and rushes up.*]

Dmitri! Dmitri! my God! what brings you here? he is innocent, I tell you. I'll pay for him. Take your money [*Flings money on the ground*], take all I have, give me my son. Villains! Villains! where are you bringing him?

COLONEL. To Siberia, old man.

PETER. No, no; take me instead.

COLONEL. He is a Nihilist.

PETER. You lie! you lie! He is innocent. [*The soldiers force him back with their guns and shut the door against him. He beats with his fists against it.*] Dmitri! Dmitri! a Nihilist! [*Falls down on floor.*]

VERA [*Who has remained motionless, picks up paper now from under her feet and reads*]. "99 Rue Tchernavaya, Moscow. To strangle whatever nature is in me; neither to love nor to be loved; neither to pity nor to be pitied; neither to marry nor to be given in marriage, till the end is come." My brother, I shall keep the oath. [*Kisses the paper.*] You shall be revenged!

[VERA *stands immobile, holding paper in her lifted hand.* PETER *is lying on the floor.* MICHAEL, *who has just come in, is bending over him.*]

END OF PROLOGUE

FIRST ACT

ACT I [1]

SCENE—99 *Rue Tchernavaya, Moscow. A large garret lit by oil lamps hung from ceiling. Some masked men standing silent and apart from one another. A man in a scarlet mask is writing at a table. Door at back. Man in yellow with drawn sword at it. Knocks heard. Figures in cloaks and masks enter.*

Password. Per crucem ad lucem.

Answer. Per sanguinem ad libertatem.

[*Clock strikes.* CONSPIRATORS *form a semicircle in the middle of the stage.*]

[2] PRESIDENT. What is the word?

FIRST CONSP. Nabat.

PRES. The answer?

SECOND CONSP. Kalit.

PRES. What hour is it?

THIRD CONSP. The hour to suffer.

PRES. What day?

FOURTH CONSP. The day of oppression.

PRES. What year?

FIFTH CONSP. Since the Revolution of France, the ninth year.[2]

PRES. How many are we in number?

SIXTH CONSP. Ten, nine, and three.

PRES. The Galilæan had less to conquer the world; but what is our mission?

SEVENTH CONSP. To give freedom.

PRES. Our creed?

EIGHTH CONSP. To annihilate.

PRES. Our duty?

NINTH CONSP. To obey.

PRES. Brothers, the questions have been answered well. There are none but Nihilists present. Let us see each other's faces. [*The* CONSPIRATORS *unmask.*] Michael, recite the oath.

MICHAEL. To strangle whatever nature is in us; neither to love nor to be loved, neither to pity nor to be pitied, neither to marry nor to be given in marriage, till the end is come; to stab secretly by night; to drop poison in the glass; to set father against son, and husband against wife; without fear, without hope, without future, to suffer, to annihilate, to revenge.

PRES. Are we all agreed?

CONSPIRATORS. We are all agreed. [*They disperse in various directions about the stage.*]

PRES. 'Tis after the hour, Michael, and she is not yet here.

MICH. Would that she were! We can do little without her.

ALEXIS. She cannot have been seized, President? but the police are on her track, I know.

MICH. You always seem to know a good deal about the movements of the police in Moscow—too much for an honest conspirator.

PRES. If those dogs have caught her, [3] the red flag of the people will float on a barricade in [3] every street till we find her! It was foolish of her to go to the Grand Duke's ball. I told her so, but she said she wanted to see the Czar and all his cursed brood face to face once.

ALEXIS. Gone to the State ball?

MICH. I have no fear. She is as hard to capture as a she-wolf is, and twice as dangerous; besides, she is well disguised. But is there any news from the Palace to-night, President? What is that bloody [4] despot doing now besides torturing his only son? Have any of you

seen him? One hears strange stories about him. They say he loves the people; but a king's son never does that. You cannot breed them like that.

PRES. Since he came back from abroad a year ago his father has kept him in close prison in his palace.

MICH. An excellent training to make him a tyrant in his turn; but is there any news, I say?

PRES. A council is to be held to-morrow, at four o'clock, on some secret business the spies cannot find out.

MICH. A council in a king's palace is sure to be about some bloody work or other. But in what room is this council to be held?

PRES. [*Reading from letter*]. In the yellow tapestry room called after the Empress Catherine.

MICH. I care not for such long-sounding names. I would know where it is.

PRES. I cannot tell, Michael. I know more about the insides of prisons than of palaces.

MICH. [*Speaking suddenly to* ALEXIS]. Where is this room, Alexis?

ALEXIS. It is on the first floor, looking out on to the inner courtyard. But why do you ask, Michael?

MICH. Nothing, nothing, boy! I merely take a great interest in the Czar's life and movements and I knew you could tell me all about the palace. Every poor student of medicine in Moscow knows all about king's houses. It is their duty, is it not?

ALEXIS [*Aside*]. Can Michael suspect me? There is something strange in his manner to-night. Why doesn't she come? The whole fire of revolution seems fallen into dull ashes when she is not here.

[5] MICH. Have you cured many patients lately, at your hospital, boy?

ALEX. There is one who lies sick to death I would fain cure, but cannot.

MICH. Ay, and who is that?

ALEX. Russia, our mother.

MICH. The curing of Russia is surgeon's business, and must be done by the knife. I like not your method of medicine.[5]

PRES. Professor, we have read the proofs of your last article; it is very good, indeed.

MICH. What is it about, Professor?

PROFESSOR. The subject, my good brother, is assassination considered as a method of political reform.

MICH. I think little of pen and ink in revolutions. One dagger will do more than a hundred epigrams. Still, let us read this scholar's last production. Give it to me. I will read it myself.

PROF. Brother, you never mind your stops; let Alexis read it.

MICH. Ay! he is as tripping of speech as if he were some young aristocrat; but for my own part I care not for the stops so that the sense be plain.

ALEX. [*Reading*]. "The past has belonged to the tyrant, and he has defiled it; ours is the future, and we shall make it holy." Ay! let us make the future holy; let there be one revolution at least which is not bred in crime, nurtured in murder!

MICH. They have spoken to us by the sword, and by the sword we shall answer! You are too delicate for us, Alexis. There should be none here but men whose hands are rough with labour or red with blood.

PRES. Peace, Michael, peace! He is the bravest heart among us.

MICH. [*Aside*]. He will need to be brave to-night.

[*The sound of the sleigh bells is heard outside.*]

VOICE [*Outside*]. Per crucem ad lucem.

Answer of man on guard. Per sanguinem ad libertatem.

MICH. Who is that?

VERA. God save the people!

PRES. Welcome, Vera, welcome! [6] We have been sick at heart till we saw you; but now methinks the star of freedom has come to wake us from the night.[6]

VERA. [7] It is night, indeed, brother! Night without moon or star! [7] Russia is smitten to the heart! The man Ivan whom men call the Czar strikes now at our mother with a dagger deadlier than ever forged by tyranny against a people's life!

MICH. What has the tyrant [8] done now?

VERA. To-morrow martial law is to be proclaimed in Russia.

OMNES. Martial law! We are lost! We are lost!

ALEX. Martial law! Impossible!

MICH. Fool, nothing is impossible in Russia but reform.

VERA. Ay, martial law. The last right to which the people clung has been taken from them. Without trial, without appeal, without accuser even, our brothers will be taken from their houses, shot in the streets like dogs, sent away to die in the snow, to starve in the dungeon, to rot in the mine. Do you know what martial law means? It means the strangling of a whole nation. [9] The streets will be filled with soldiers night and day; there will be sentinels at every door.[9] No man dare walk abroad now but the spy or the traitor. Cooped up in the dens we hide in, meeting by stealth, speaking with bated breath; what good can we do now for Russia?

PRES. We can suffer at least.

VERA. We have done that too much already. The hour is now come to annihilate and to revenge.

PRES. Up to this the people have borne everything.

VERA. Because they have understood nothing. But now we, the Nihilists, have given them the tree of knowledge to eat of, and the day of silent suffering is over for Russia.

MICH. Martial law, Vera! This is fearful tidings you bring.

PRES. It is the death warrant of liberty in Russia.

VERA. Or the tocsin of [10] revolution.

MICH. Are you sure it is true?

VERA. Here is the proclamation. I stole it myself at the ball to-night from a young fool, one of Prince Paul's secretaries, who had been given it to copy. It was that which made me so late.

[VERA *hands proclamation to* MICHAEL, *who reads it.*]

MICH. "To ensure the public safety — martial law. By order of the Czar, father of his people." The father of his people!

VERA. Ay! a father whose name shall not be hallowed, whose kingdom shall change to a republic, whose trespasses shall not be forgiven him, because he has robbed us of our daily bread; with whom is neither might, nor right, nor glory, now or for ever.

PRES. It must be about this that the council meet to-morrow. It has not yet been signed.

ALEX. It shall not be while I have a tongue to plead with.

MICH. Or while I have hands to smite with.

VERA. Martial law! O God, how easy it is for a king to kill his people by thousands, but we cannot rid ourselves of one crowned man in Europe! What is there of awful majesty in these men which makes the hand unsteady, the dagger treacherous, the pistol-shot harmless? Are they not men of like passions with ourselves, vulnerable to the same diseases, of flesh and blood not different from our own? What made Olgiati tremble at the supreme crisis of that Roman life, [11] and Guido's nerve fail him when he should have been of iron and of steel? A plague, I say, on these fools of Naples, Berlin, and Spain! [11] Methinks that if I stood face to face with

one of the crowned men my eye would see more clearly, my aim be more sure, my whole body gain a strength and power that was not my own! Oh, to think what stands between us and freedom in Europe! a few old men, wrinkled, feeble, tottering dotards whom a boy could strangle for a ducat, or a woman stab in a night-time. And these are the things that keep us from democracy, that keep us from liberty. But now methinks the brood of men is dead and the dull earth grown sick of child-bearing, else would no crowned dog pollute God's air by living.

OMNES. Try us! Try us! Try us!

MICH. We shall try thee, too, some day, Vera.

VERA. I pray God thou mayest! Have I not strangled whatever nature is in me, and shall I not keep my oath?

MICH. [*To* PRESIDENT]. Martial law, President! Come, there is no time to be lost. We have twelve hours yet before us till the council meet. [12] Twelve hours! One can overthrow a dynasty in less time than that.[12]

PRES. [13] Ay! or lose one's own head.[13]

[MICHAEL and *the* PRESIDENT *retire to one corner of the stage and sit whispering.* VERA *takes up the proclamation, and reads it to herself.* ALEXIS *watches and suddenly rushes up to her.*]

ALEX. Vera!

VERA. Alexis, you here! Foolish boy, have I not prayed you to stay away? All of us here are doomed to die before our time, fated to expiate by suffering whatever good we do; but you, with your [14] bright, boyish face [14] you are too young to die yet.

ALEX. One is never too young to die for one's country!

VERA. Why do you come here night after night?

ALEX. Because I love the people.

VERA. But your fellow-students must miss you. Are there no traitors among them? You know what spies

there are in the University here. O Alexis, you must go! You see how desperate suffering has made us. There is no room here for a nature like yours. You must not come again.

ALEX. Why do you think so poorly of me? Why should I live while my brothers suffer?

VERA. You spake to me of your mother once. You said you loved her. Oh, think of her!

ALEX. I have no mother now but Russia, my life is hers to take or give away; but to-night I am here to see you. They tell me you are leaving for Novgorod to-morrow.

VERA. I must. They are getting faint-hearted there, and I would fan the flame of this revolution into such a blaze that the eyes of all kings in Europe shall be blinded. If martial law is passed they will need me all the more there. There is no limit, it seems, to the tyranny of one man; but there shall be a limit to the suffering of a whole people.

ALEX. God knows it, I am with you. But you must not go. [15] The police are watching every train for you.[15] When you are seized they have orders to place you without trial in the lowest dungeon of the palace.[16] I know it — no matter how. [17] Oh, think how without you the sun goes from our life, how the people will lose their leader and liberty her priestess.[17] Vera, you must not go!

VERA. If you wish it, I will stay. I would live a little longer for freedom, a little longer for Russia.

ALEX. When you die then Russia is smitten indeed; when you die then I shall lose all hope — all. . . . Vera, this is fearful news you bring — martial law — it is too terrible. I knew it not, by my soul, I knew it not!

VERA. How could you have known it? It is too well laid a plot for that. This great White Czar, whose hands are red with the blood of the people he has murdered,

whose soul is black with his iniquity, is the cleverest conspirator of us all. Oh, how could Russia bear two hearts like yours and his!

ALEX. Vera, the Emperor was not always like this. There was a time when he loved the people. It is that devil, whom God curse, Prince Paul Maraloffski who has brought him to this. To-morrow, I swear it, I shall plead for the people to the Emperor.

VERA. Plead to the Czar! Foolish boy, it is only those who are sentenced to death that ever see our Czar. Besides, what should he care for a voice that pleads for mercy? The cry of a strong nation in its agony has not moved that heart of stone.

ALEX. [*Aside*]. Yet shall I plead to him. They can but kill me.

PROF. Here are the proclamations, Vera. Do you think they will do?

VERA. I shall read them. [18] How fair he looks! [18] Methinks he never seemed so noble as to-night. Liberty is blessed in having such a lover.

ALEX. Well, President, what are you deep in?

MICH. We are thinking of the best way of killing bears. [*Whispers to* PRESIDENT *and leads him aside.*]

PROF. [*To* VERA]. And the letters [19] from our brothers at Paris and Berlin. What answer shall we send to them? [19]

VERA [*Takes them mechanically*]. Had I not strangled nature, sworn neither to love nor to be loved, methinks [20] I might have loved him. Oh, I am a fool, a traitor myself, a traitor myself! But why did he come amongst us with his bright [21] young face, his heart aflame for liberty, his pure white soul? Why does he make me feel at times as if I would have him as my king, Republican though I be? Oh, fool, fool, fool! False to your oath! weak as water! Have done! Remember what you are — a Nihilist, a Nihilist!

PRES. [*To* MICHAEL]. But you will be seized, Michael.

MICH. I think not. I will wear the uniform of the Imperial Guard, and the Colonel on duty is one of us. It is on the first floor, you remember; so I can take a long shot.

PRES. Shall I tell the brethren?

[22] MICH. Not a word, not a word! There is a traitor amongst us.

VERA. Come, are these the proclamations? Yes, they will do; yes, they will do. Send five hundred to Kiev and Odessa and Novgorod, five hundred to Warsaw, and have twice the number distributed among the Southern Provinces, though these dull Russian peasants care little for our proclamations, and less for our martyrdoms. When the blow is struck it must be from the town, not from the country.

MICH. Ay, and by the sword not by the goose-quill.

VERA. Where are the letters from Poland?

PROF. Here.

VERA. Unhappy Poland! The eagles of Russia have fed on her heart. We must not forget our brothers there.[22]

PRES. Is this true, Michael?

MICH. Ay, I stake my life on it.

PRES. [23] Let the doors be locked, then.[23] Alexis Ivanacievitch entered on our roll of the brothers as a Student of the School of Medicine at Moscow. Why did you not tell us of this bloody scheme [24] of martial law?

ALEX. I, President?

MICH. Ay, you! You knew it, none better. Such weapons as these are not forged in a day. Why did you not tell us of it? A week ago there had been time [25] to lay the mine, to raise the barricade, to strike one blow at least for liberty.[25] But now the hour is past! It is too late, [26] it is too late! [26] Why did you keep it a secret from us, I say?

ALEX. Now by the hand of freedom, Michael, my brother, you wrong me. I knew nothing of this hideous law. By my soul, my brothers, I knew not of it! How should I know?

MICH. Because you are a traitor! Where did you go when you left us the night of our last meeting here?

[27] ALEX. To mine own house, Michael.[27]

MICH. Liar! I was on your track. You left here an hour after midnight. Wrapped in a large cloak, you crossed the river in a boat a mile below the second bridge, and gave the ferryman a gold piece, you, the poor student of medicine! You doubled back twice, and hid in an archway so long that I had almost made up my mind to stab you at once, only that I am fond of hunting. So! you thought that you had baffled all pursuit, did you? Fool! I am a bloodhound that never loses the scent. I followed you from street to street. At last I saw you pass swiftly across the Place S. Isaac, whisper to the guards the secret password, enter the palace by a private door with your own key.

CONSPIRATORS. The palace!

VERA. Alexis!

MICH. I waited. All through the dreary watches of our long Russian night I waited, that I might kill you with your Judas hire still hot in your hand. But you never came out; you never left that palace at all. I saw the blood-red sun rise through the yellow fog over the murky town; I saw a new day of oppression dawn on Russia; but you never came out. So you pass nights in the palace, do you? You know the password for the guards! you have a key to a secret door. Oh, you are a spy — you are a spy! I never trusted you, [28] with your soft white hands, your curled hair, your pretty graces.[28] You have no mark of suffering about you; you cannot be of the people. You are a spy — [29] a spy — traitor.[29]

OMNES. Kill him! Kill him! [*Draw their knives.*]

VERA [*Rushing in front of* ALEXIS]. Stand back, I say, Michael! Stand back all! [30] Do not dare [31] lay a hand upon him! He is the noblest heart amongst us.

OMNES. Kill him! Kill him! He is a spy!

VERA. Dare to lay a finger on him and I leave you all to yourselves.

PRES. Vera, did you not hear what Michael said of him? He stayed all night in Czar's palace. He has a password and a private key. What else should he be but a spy?

VERA. Bah! I do not believe Michael. It is a lie! It is [31] a lie! Alexis, say it is a lie!

ALEX. It is true. Michael has told what he saw. I did pass that night in the Czar's palace. Michael has spoken the truth.

VERA. Stand back, I say: stand back! Alexis, I do not care. I trust you: you would not betray us: you would not sell the people for money. You are honest, true! Oh, say you are no spy!

ALEX. Spy? You know I am not. I am with you, my brothers, to the death.

MICH. Ay, to your own death.

ALEX. Vera, you [32] know I am true.

VERA. I know it well.

PRES. Why are you here, traitor?

ALEX. Because I love the people.

MICH. Then you can be a martyr for them?

VERA. You must kill me first, Michael, before you lay a finger on him.

PRES. Michael, we dare not lose Vera. It is her whim to let this boy live. We can keep him here to-night. Up to this he has not betrayed us.

[*Tramp of soldiers outside, knocking at door.*] [33]

VOICE. Open in the name of the Emperor!

MICH. He *has* betrayed us. This is your doing, spy!

PRES. Come, Michael, come. We have no time to cut one another's throats while we have our own heads to save.

VOICE. Open in the name of the Emperor!

PRES. Brothers, be masked all of you. [34] Michael, open the door. It is our only chance.[34]

[*Enter* GENERAL KOTEMKIN *and soldiers.*]

GEN. All honest citizens should be in their own houses at an hour before midnight, and not more than five people have a right to meet privately. Have you not noticed the proclamation, fellow?

MICH. Ay, you have spoiled every honest [35] wall in Moscow with it.

VERA. Peace, Michael, peace. Nay, Sir, we knew it not. We are a company of strolling players travelling from Samara to Moscow to amuse His Imperial Majesty the Czar.

GEN. But I heard loud voices before I entered. What was that?

VERA. We were rehearsing a new tragedy.

GEN. Your answers are too *honest* to be true. Come, let me see who you are. Take off those players' masks. By St. Nicholas, my beauty, if your face matches your figure, you must be a choice morsel! Come, I say, pretty one; I would sooner see your face than those of all the others.

PRES. O God! if he sees it is Vera, we are all lost!

GEN. No coquetting, my girl. Come, unmask, I say, or I shall tell my guards to do it for you.

ALEX. Stand back, I say, General Kotemkin!

GEN. Who are you, fellow, that talks with such a ripping tongue to your betters? [ALEXIS *takes his mask off.*] His Imperial Highness the Czarevitch!

OMNES. The Czarevitch! [36] It is all over! [36]

[37] PRES. He will give us up to the soldiers.[37]

MICH. [*To* VERA]. Why did you not let me kill him? Come, we must fight to the death for it.

VERA. Peace! he will not betray us.

ALEX. A whim of mine, General! You know how my father keeps me from the world and imprisons me in the palace. I should really be bored to death if I could not get out at night in disguise sometimes, and have some romantic adventure in town. I fell in with these honest folks a few hours ago.

GEN. But, your Highness —

ALEX. Oh, they are excellent actors, I assure you. If you had come in ten minutes ago, you would have witnessed a most interesting scene.

GEN. Actors, are they, Prince?

ALEX. Ay, and very ambitious actors, too. They only care to play before kings.

GEN. I' faith, your Highness, I was in hopes I had made a good haul of Nihilists.[38]

ALEX. Nihilists in Moscow, General! with you as head of the police? Impossible!

GEN. So I always tell your Imperial father. But I heard at the council to-day that that woman Vera Sabouroff, the head of them, had been seen in this very city. The Emperor's face turned as white as the snow outside. I think I never saw such terror in any man before.

ALEX. She is a dangerous woman, then, this Vera Sabouroff?

GEN. The most dangerous in all Europe.

ALEX. Did you ever see her, General?

GEN. Why, five years ago, when I was a plain Colonel, I remember her, your Highness, a common waiting girl in an inn. If I had known then what she was going to turn out, I would have flogged her to death on the roadside. She is not a woman at all; she is a sort of devil!

For the last eighteen months I have been hunting her, and caught sight of her once last September outside Odessa.

ALEX. How did you let her go, General?

GEN. I was by myself, and she shot one of my horses just as I was gaining on her. If I see her again I shan't miss my chance. The Emperor has put twenty thousand roubles on her head.

ALEX. I hope you will get it, General; but meanwhile you are frightening these honest people out of their wits, and disturbing the tragedy. Good night, General.

GEN. Yes; but I should like to see their faces, your Highness.

ALEX. No, General; you must not ask that; you know how these gipsies hate to be stared at.

GEN. Yes. But, your Highness —

ALEX. [*Haughtily*]. General, they are my friends, that is enough. And, General, not a word of this little adventure here, you understand. I shall rely on you.

GEN. I shall not forget, Prince. But shall we not see you back to the palace? The State ball is almost over and you are expected.

ALEX. I shall be there; but I shall return alone. Remember, not a word about my strolling players.

GEN. Or your pretty gipsy, eh, Prince? your pretty gipsy! I' faith, I should like to see her before I go; she has such fine eyes through her mask. Well, good night, your Highness; good night.

ALEX. Good night, General.

[*Exit* GENERAL *and the soldiers.*]

VERA [*Throwing off her mask*]. Saved! and by you!

ALEX. [*Clasping her hand*]. Brothers, you trust me now?

TABLEAU

END OF ACT I

SECOND ACT

ACT II

SCENE — *Council Chamber in the Emperor's Palace, hung with yellow tapestry. Table, with chair of State, set for the Czar; window behind, opening on to a balcony. As the scene progresses the light outside gets darker.*

Present — PRINCE PAUL MARALOFFSKI, PRINCE PETROVITCH, COUNT ROUVALOFF, BARON RAFF, COUNT PETOUCHOF.

PRINCE PETRO. So our young scatter-brained Czarevitch has been forgiven at last, and is to take his seat here again.

PRINCE PAUL. Yes; if that is not meant as an extra punishment. For my own part, at least, I find these Cabinet Councils extremely exhausting.

PRINCE PETRO. Naturally; you are always speaking.

PRINCE PAUL. No; I think it must be that I have to listen sometimes.

COUNT R. Still, anything is better than being kept in a sort of prison, like he was — never allowed to go out into the world.

PRINCE PAUL. My dear Count, for romantic young people like he is, the world always looks best at a distance; and a prison where one's allowed to order one's own dinner is not at all a bad place. [*Enter the* CZAREVITCH. *The courtiers rise.*] Ah! good afternoon, Prince. Your Highness is looking a little pale to-day.

CZARE. [*Slowly, after a pause*]. I want change of air.

PRINCE PAUL [*Smiling*]. A most revolutionary sentiment! Your Imperial father would highly disapprove of any reforms with the thermometer in Russia.

CZARE. [*Bitterly*]. My Imperial father had kept me for six months in this dungeon of a palace. This morning he has me suddenly woke up to see some wretched Nihilists hung; it sickened me, the bloody butchery, though it was a noble thing to see how well these men can die.

PRINCE PAUL. When you are as old as I am, Prince, you will understand that there are few things easier than to live badly and to die well.

CZARE. Easy to die well! A lesson experience cannot have taught you, whatever you may know of a bad life.

PRINCE PAUL [*Shrugging his shoulders*]. Experience, the name men give to their mistakes. I never commit any.

CZARE. [*Bitterly*]. No; crimes are more in your line.

PRINCE PETRO [*To the* CZAREVITCH]. The Emperor was a good deal agitated about your late appearance at the ball last night, Prince.

[1] COUNT R. [*Laughing*]. I believe he thought the Nihilists had broken into the palace and carried you off.

BARON RAFF. If they had you would have missed a charming dance.[1]

PRINCE PAUL. And [2] an excellent supper. Gringoire really excelled himself in his salad. Ah! you may laugh, Baron; but to make a good salad is a much more difficult thing than cooking accounts. To make a good salad is to be a brilliant diplomatist — the problem is so entirely the same in both cases. To know exactly how much oil one must put with one's vinegar.

BARON RAFF. A cook and a diplomatist! an excellent parallel. If I had a son who was a fool I'd make him one or the other.

PRINCE PAUL. I see your father did not hold the same opinion, Baron. But, believe me, you are wrong to run down cookery. For myself, the only immortality I desire is to invent a new sauce. I have never had time enough

to think seriously about it, but I feel it is in me, I feel it is in me.

CZARE. You have certainly missed your *metier*,[3] Prince Paul; the *cordon bleu* would have suited you much better than the Grand Cross of Honour. But you know you could never have worn your white apron well; you would have soiled it too soon, your hands are not clean enough.

PRINCE PAUL [*Bowing*]. Que voulez vous? I manage your father's business.

CZARE. [*Bitterly*]. You mismanage my father's business, you mean! Evil genius of his life that you are! before you came there was some love left in him. It is you who have embittered his nature, poured into his ear the poison of treacherous counsel, made him hated by the whole people, made him what he is — a tyrant!

[*The courtiers look significantly at each other.*]

PRINCE PAUL [*Calmly*]. I see your Highness does want change of air. But I have been an eldest son myself. [*Lights a cigarette.*] I know what it is when a father won't die to please one.

[*The* CZAREVITCH *goes to the top of the stage, and leans against the window, looking out.*]

PRINCE PETRO [*To* BARON RAFF]. Foolish boy! [4] He will be sent into exile, or worse, if he is not careful.[4]

BARON RAFF. Yes.[5] What a mistake it is to be sincere!

PRINCE PETRO. The only folly you have never committed, Baron.

BARON RAFF. One has only one head, you know, Prince.

PRINCE PAUL. My dear Baron, your head is the last thing any one would wish to take from you. [*Pulls out snuffbox and offers it to* PRINCE PETROVITCH.]

PRINCE PETRO. Thanks, Prince! Thanks!

PRINCE PAUL. Very delicate, isn't it? I get it direct

from Paris. But under this vulgar Republic everything has degenerated over there. "Cotelettes à l'impériale" vanished, of course, with the Bourbon, and omelettes went out with the Orleanists. La belle France is entirely ruined, Prince, through bad morals and worse cookery. [*Enter the* MARQUIS DE POIVRARD.] Ah! Marquis. I trust Madame la Marquise is well.

MARQUIS DE P. You ought to know better than I do, Prince Paul; you see more *of* her.

PRINCE PAUL [*Bowing*]. Perhaps I see more *in* her, Marquis. Your wife is really a charming woman, so full of *esprit*, and so satirical too; she talks continually of you when we are together.

PRINCE PETRO [*Looking at the clock*]. His Majesty is a little late to-day, is he not?

PRINCE PAUL. What has happened to you, my dear Petrovitch? you seem quite out of sorts. You haven't quarrelled with your cook, I hope? What a tragedy that would be for you; you would lose all your friends.

PRINCE PETRO. I fear I wouldn't be so fortunate as that. You forget I would still have my purse.[6] But you are wrong for once; my chef and I are on excellent[7] terms.

PRINCE PAUL. Then your creditors or Mademoiselle Vera Sabouroff have been writing to you? I find both of them such excellent correspondents. But really you needn't be alarmed. I find the most violent proclamations from the Executive Committee, as they call it, left all over my house. I never read them; they are so badly spelt as a rule.

PRINCE PETRO. Wrong again, Prince; the Nihilists leave me alone for some reason or other.

PRINCE PAUL [*Aside*]. Ah! true. I forgot. Indifference is the revenge the world takes on mediocrities.

PRINCE PETRO. I am bored with life,[8] Prince. Since

the opera season ended I have been a perpetual martyr to ennui.

PRINCE PAUL. The maladie du siècle! You want a new excitement, Prince. Let me see — you have been married twice already; suppose you try — falling in love, for once.

BARON R. Prince, I have been thinking a good deal lately —

PRINCE PAUL [*Interrupting*]. You surprise me very much, Baron.

BARON R. I cannot understand your nature.

PRINCE PAUL [*Smiling*]. If my nature had been made to suit your comprehension rather than my own requirements, I am afraid I would have made a very poor figure in the world.

COUNT R. There seems to be nothing in life about which you would not jest.

PRINCE PAUL. Ah! my dear Count, life is much too important a thing ever to talk seriously about it.

CZARE. [*Coming back from the window*]. I don't think Prince Paul's nature is such a mystery. He would stab his best friend for the sake of writing an epigram on his tombstone, or experiencing a new sensation.

PRINCE PAUL. Parbleu! I would sooner lose my best friend than my worst enemy. To have friends, you know, one need only be good-natured; but when a man has no enemy left there must be something mean about him.

CZARE. [*Bitterly*]. If to have enemies is a measure of greatness, then you must be a Colossus, indeed, Prince.

PRINCE PAUL. Yes, I know I'm the most hated man in Russia, except your father, [9] except your father, of course,[9] Prince. He doesn't seem to like it much, by the way, but I do, I assure you. [*Bitterly.*] I love to drive through the streets and see how the canaille scowl at me from every corner. It makes me feel I am a power in Russia; one man against a hundred millions! Besides,

I have no ambition to be a popular hero, to be crowned with laurels one year and pelted with stones the next; I prefer dying peaceably in my own bed.

CZARE. And after death?

PRINCE PAUL [*Shrugging his shoulders*]. Heaven is a despotism. I shall be at home there.

CZARE. Do you never think of the people and their rights?

PRINCE PAUL. The people and their rights bore me. I am sick of both. In these modern days, to be vulgar, illiterate, common and vicious, seems to give a man a marvellous infinity of rights that his honest fathers never dreamed of. Believe me, Prince, in good democracy every man should be an aristocrat; but these people in Russia who seek to thrust us out are no better than the animals in one's preserves, and made to be shot at, most of them.

CZARE. [*Excitedly*]. If they are [10] common, illiterate, vulgar, no better than the beasts of the field, who made them so?

[*Enter* AIDE-DE-CAMP.]

AIDE-DE-CAMP. His Imperial Majesty, the Emperor!

[PRINCE PAUL *looks at the* CZAREVITCH, *and smiles.*]

[*Enter the* CZAR, *surrounded by his guard.*]

CZARE. [*Rushing forward to meet him*]. Sire!

CZAR [*Nervous and frightened*]. Don't come too near me, boy! Don't come too near me, I say! There is always something about an heir to a crown unwholesome to his father. Who is that man over there? I don't know him. What is he doing? Is he a conspirator? Have you searched him? Give him till to-morrow to confess, then hang him! — hang him!

PRINCE PAUL. Sire, you are anticipating history. This is Count Petouchof, your new ambassador to Berlin. He is come to kiss hands on his appointment.

CZAR. To kiss my hand? There is some plot in it. He wants to poison me. There, kiss my son's hand! it will do quite as well.

[PRINCE PAUL *signs to* PRINCE PETOUCHOF *to leave the room. Exit* PETOUCHOF *and the guards.* CZAR *sinks down into his chair. The courtiers remain silent.*]

PNINCE PAUL [*Approaching*]. Sire! will your Majesty —

CZAR. What do you startle me like that for? No, I won't. [*Watches the courtiers nervously.*] Why are you clattering your sword, sir? [*To* COUNT ROUVALOFF.] Take it off, I shall have no man wear a sword in my presence [*Looking at* CZAREVITCH], least of all my son. [*To* PRINCE PAUL.] You are not angry with me, Prince? You won't desert me, will you? Say you won't desert me. What do you want? You can have anything — anything.

PRINCE PAUL [*Bowing very low*]. Sire! 'tis enough for me to have your confidence. [*Aside.*] I was afraid he was going to revenge himself, and give me another decoration.

CZAR [*Returning to his chair*]. Well, gentlemen.

MARQ. DE POIV. Sire, I have the honour to present to you a loyal address from your subjects in the Province of Archangel, expressing their horror at the last attempt on your Majesty's life.

PRINCE PAUL. The last attempt but two, you ought to have said, Marquis. Don't you see it is dated three weeks back?

CZAR. They are good people in the Province of Archangel — honest, loyal people. They love me very much — simple, loyal people; give them a new saint, it costs nothing. Well, Alexis [*Turning to the* CZAREVITCH] — how many traitors were hung this morning?

CZARE. There were three men strangled, Sire.

CZAR. There should have been three [11] thousand. I

would to God that this people had but one neck that I might strangle them with one noose! Did they tell anything? whom did they implicate? what did they confess?

CZARE. Nothing, Sire.

CZAR. They should have been tortured then; why weren't they tortured? Must I always be fighting in the dark? Am I never to know from what root these traitors spring?

CZARE. What root should there be of discontent among the people but tyranny and injustice amongst their rulers?

CZAR. What did you say, boy? tyranny! tyranny! Am I a tyrant? I'm not. I love the people. I'm their father. I'm called so in every official proclamation. Have a care, boy; have a care. You don't seem to be cured yet of your foolish tongue. [*Goes over to* PRINCE PAUL *and puts his hand on his shoulder.*] Prince Paul, tell me were there many people there this morning to see the Nihilists hung?

PRINCE PAUL. Hanging is of course a good deal less of a novelty in Russia now, Sire, than it was three or four years ago; and you know how easily the people get tired even of their best amusements. But the square and the tops of the houses were really quite crowded, were they not, Prince? [*To the* CZAREVITCH *who takes no notice.*]

CZAR. That's right; all loyal citizens should be there. It shows them what to look forward to. Did you arrest any one in the crowd?

PRINCE PAUL. Yes, Sire, a woman for cursing your name. [*The* CZAREVITCH *starts anxiously.*] She was the mother of the two criminals.

CZAR [*Looking at* CZAREVITCH]. She should have blessed me for having rid her of her children. Send her to prison.

CZARE. The prisons of Russia are too full already, Sire. There is no room in them for any more victims.

[12] CZAR. They don't die fast enough, then. You should put more of them into one cell at once. You don't keep them long enough in the mines. If you do they're sure to die; but you're all too merciful. I'm too merciful myself. Send her to Siberia.[12] She is sure to die on the way. [*Enter an* AIDE-DE-CAMP.] Who's that? Who's that?

AIDE-DE-CAMP. A letter for his Imperial Majesty.

CZAR [*To* PRINCE PAUL]. I won't open it. There may be something in it.

PRINCE PAUL. It would be a very disappointing letter, Sire, if there wasn't. [*Takes letter himself, and reads it.*]

PRINCE PETRO [*To* COUNT ROUVALOFF]. It must be some sad news. I know that smile too well.

PRINCE PAUL. From the Chief of the Police at Archangel, Sire. "The Governor of the province was shot this morning by a woman as he was entering the courtyard of his own house. The assassin has been seized."

CZAR. I never trusted the people of Archangel. It's a nest of Nihilists and conspirators. Take away their saints; they don't deserve them.

PRINCE PAUL. Your Highness would punish them more severely by giving them an extra one. Three governors shot in two months. [*Smiles to himself.*] Sire, permit me to recommend your loyal subject, the Marquis de Poivrard, as the new governor of your Province of Archangel.

MARQ. DE POIV. [*Hurriedly*]. Sire, I am unfit for this post.

PRINCE PAUL. Marquis, you are too modest. Believe me, there is no man in Russia I would sooner see Governor of Archangel than yourself. [*Whispers to* CZAR.]

CZAR. Quite right, Prince Paul; you are always right. See that the Marquis's letters are made out at once.

PRINCE PAUL. He can start to-night, Sire. I shall

really miss you very much, Marquis. I always liked your taste in wines and wives extremely.

MARQ. DE POIV. [*To the* CZAR]. Start to-night, Sire? [PRINCE PAUL *whispers to the* CZAR.]

CZAR. Yes, Marquis, to-night; it is better to go at once.

PRINCE PAUL. I shall see that Madame la Marquise is not too lonely while you are away; so you need not be alarmed for her.

COUNT R. [*To* PRINCE PETROVITCH]. I should be more alarmed for myself.

CZAR. The Governor of Archangel shot in his own courtyard by a woman! I'm not safe here. I'm not safe anywhere, with that she devil of the revolution, Vera Sabouroff, here in Moscow. Prince Paul, is that woman still here?

PRINCE PAUL. They tell me she was at the Grand Duke's ball last night. I can hardly believe that; but she certainly had intended to leave for Novgorod to-day, Sire. The police were watching every train for her; but, for some reason or other, she did not go. Some traitor must have warned her. But I shall catch her yet. A chase after a beautiful woman is always exciting.

CZAR. You must hunt her down with bloodhounds, and when she is taken I shall hew her limb from limb. I shall stretch her on the rack till her pale white body is twisted and curled like paper in the fire.

PRINCE PAUL. Oh, we shall have another hunt immediately for her, Sire! Prince Alexis will assist us, I am sure.

CZARE. You never require any assistance to ruin a woman, Prince Paul.

CZAR. Vera, the Nihilist, in Moscow! O God,[13] were it not better to die at once the dog's death they plot for me than to live as I live now! Never to sleep, or, if I do, to dream such horrid dreams that Hell itself were peace

when matched with them. To trust none but those I have bought, to buy none worth trusting! To see a traitor in every smile, poison in every dish, a dagger in every hand! To lie awake at night, listening from hour to hour for the stealthy creeping of the murderer, for the laying of the damned mine! You are all spies! you are all spies! You worst of all — you, my own son! Which of you is it who hides these bloody proclamations under my own pillow, or at the table where I sit? Which of ye all is the Judas who betrays us? O God! O God! methinks there was a time once, in our war with England, when nothing could make me afraid. [*This with more calm and pathos.*] I have ridden into the crimson heart of war, and borne back an eagle which those wild islanders had taken from us. Men said I was brave then. My father gave me the Iron Cross of valour. Oh, could he see me now with this coward's livery ever in my cheek! [*Sinks into his chair.*] I never knew any love when I was a boy. I was ruled by terror myself, how else should I rule now? [*Starts up.*] But I will have revenge; I will have revenge. For every hour I have lain awake at night, waiting for the noose or the dagger, they shall pass years in Siberia, centuries in the mines! Ay! I shall have revenge.

CZARE. Father! have mercy on the people. Give them what they ask.

PRINCE PAUL. And begin, Sire, with your own head; they have a particular liking for that.

CZAR. The people! the people! A tiger which I have let loose upon myself; but I will fight with it to the death. [14] I am done with half measures.[14] I shall crush these Nihilists at a blow. There shall not be a man of them, ay, or a woman, either, left alive in Russia. [15] Am I Emperor for [15] nothing, that a woman should hold me at bay? Vera Sabouroff shall be in my power, I swear it, before a week is ended, [16] though I burn my whole city to

find her.[16] She shall be flogged by the knout, stifled in the fortress, strangled in the square!

CZARE. O God!

CZAR. For two years her hands have been clutching at my throat; for two years she has made my life a hell; but I shall have revenge. Martial law, Prince, martial law over the whole Empire; that will give me revenge. A good measure, Prince, eh? a good measure.

PRINCE PAUL. And an economical one too, Sire. It would carry off your surplus population in six months; and save you many expenses in courts of justice; they will not be needed now.

CZAR. Quite right. There are too many people in Russia, too much money spent on them, too much money in courts of justice. I'll shut them up.

CZARE. Sire, reflect before —

CZAR. When can you have the proclamations ready, Prince Paul?

PRINCE PAUL. They have been printed for the last six months, Sire. I knew you would need them.

CZAR. That's good! That's very good! Let us begin at once. Ah, Prince, if every king in Europe had a minister like you —

CZARE. There would be less kings in Europe than there are.

CZAR [*In frightened whisper, to* PRINCE PAUL]. What does he mean? Do you trust him? His prison hasn't cured him yet. Shall I banish him? Shall I [*Whispers*] . . .? The Emperor Paul did it. The Empress Catherine there[17] [*Points to picture on the wall*] did it. Why shouldn't I?

PRINCE PAUL Your Majesty, there is no need for alarm. The Prince is a very ingenuous young man. He pretends to be devoted to the people, and lives in a palace; preaches socialism, and draws a salary that would support

a province. He'll find out one day that the best cure for Republicanism is the Imperial crown, and will cut up the "bonnet rogue" of Democracy to make decorations for his Prime Minister.

CZAR. You are right. If he really loved the people, he could not be my son.

PRINCE PAUL. If he lived with the people for a fortnight, their bad dinners would soon cure him of his democracy. Shall we begin, Sire?

CZAR. At once. Read the proclamation. Gentlemen, be seated. Alexis, Alexis, I say, come and hear it! It will be good practice for you; you will be doing it yourself some day.

CZARE. I have heard too much of it already. [*Takes his seat at the table.* [COUNT ROUVALOFF *whispers to him.*]

CZAR. What are you whispering about there, Count Rouvaloff?

COUNT R. I was giving his Royal Highness some good advice, your Majesty.

PRINCE PAUL. Count Rouvaloff is the typical spendthrift, Sire; he is alway giving away what he needs most. [*Lays papers before the* CZAR.] I think, Sire, you will approve of this: — "Love of the people," "Father of his people," "Martial law," and the usual allusions to Providence in the last line. All it requires now is your Imperial Majesty's signature.

CZARE. Sire!

PRINCE PAUL [*Hurriedly*]. I promise your Majesty to crush every Nihilist in Russia in six months if you sign this proclamation; every Nihilist in Russia.

CZAR. Say that again! To crush every Nihilist in Russia; to crush this woman, their leader, who makes war upon me in my own city. Prince Paul Maraloffski, I create you Marechale of the whole Russian Empire to help you to carry out martial law.

CZAR. Give me the proclamation. I will sign it at once.

PRINCE PAUL [*Points on paper*]. Here, Sire.

CZARE. [*Starts up and puts his hands on the paper*]. Stay! I tell you, stay! The priests have taken heaven from the people, and you would take the earth away to.

PRINCE PAUL. We have no time, Prince, now. This boy will ruin everything. The pen, Sire.

CZARE. What! is it so small a thing to strangle a nation, to murder a kingdom, to wreck an empire? Who are we who dare lay this ban of terror on a people? Have we less vices than they have, that we bring them to the bar of judgment before us?

PRINCE PAUL. What a Communist the Prince is! He would have an equal distribution of sin as well as of property.

CZARE. Warmed by the same sun, nurtured by the same air, fashioned of flesh and blood like to our own, wherein are they different to us, save that they starve while we surfeit, that they toil while we idle, that they sicken while we poison, that they die while we strangle?

CZAR. How dare — ?

CZARE. I dare all for the people; but you would rob them of common rights of common men.

CZAR. The people have no rights.

CZARE. Then they have great wrongs. Father, they have won your battles for you; from the pine forests of the Baltic to the palms of India they have ridden on victory's mighty wings in search of your glory! Boy as I am in years, I have seen wave after wave of living men sweep up the heights of battle to their death; aye, and snatch perilous conquest from the scales of war when the bloody crescent seemed to shake above our eagles.

CZAR [*Somewhat moved*]. Those men are dead. What have I to do with them?

CZARE. Nothing! The dead are safe; you[18] cannot

harm them now. They sleep their last long sleep. Some in Turkish waters, others by the wind-swept heights of Norway and the Dane! But these, the living, our brothers, what have we done for them? They asked you for bread, you gave them a stone. They sought for freedom, you scourged them with scorpions. You have sown the seeds of this revolution yourself! —

PRINCE PAUL. And are we not cutting down the harvest?

CZARE. Oh, my brothers! better far that ye had died in the iron hail and screaming shell of battle than to come back to such a doom as [19] this! The beasts of the forests have their lairs, and the wild beasts their caverns, but the people of Russia, conquerors of the world, have not where to lay their heads.

PRINCE PAUL. They have the headsman's block.

CZARE. The headsman's block: Aye, you have killed their souls at your pleasure, you would kill their bodies now.

CZAR. Insolent boy! Have you forgotten who is Emperor of Russia?

CZARE. No! The people reign now, by the grace of God.[20] You should have been their shepherd; you have fled away like the hireling, and let the wolves in upon them.

CZAR. Take him away! Take him away, Prince Paul!

CZARE. God hath given this people tongues to speak with; you would cut them out that they may be dumb in their agony, silent in their torture! But God hath given them hands to smite with, and they shall smite! Ay! from the sick and labouring womb of this unhappy land some revolution, like a bloody child, shall [21] rise up and slay you.

CZAR [*Leaping up*]. Devil! Assassin! Why do you beard me thus to my face?

CZARE. Because I[22] am a Nihilist! [*The* MINISTERS *start to their feet; there is a dead silence for a few minutes.*]

CZAR. A Nihilist! a Nihilist! Scorpion whom I have nurtured, traitor whom I have fondled, is this your bloody secret? Prince Paul Maraloffski, Marechale of the Russian Empire, arrest the Czarevitch!

MINISTERS. Arrest the Czarevitch!

CZAR. A Nihilist! If you have sown with them, you shall reap with them! If you have talked with them, you you shall rot with them! If you have lived with them, with them you shall die!

PRINCE PETRO. Die!

CZAR. A plague on all sons, I say! There should be no more marriages in Russia when one can breed such vipers as you are! Arrest the Czarevitch, I say!

PRINCE PAUL. Czarevitch! by order of the Emperor, I demand your sword. [CZAREVITCH *gives up sword;* PRINCE PAUL *places it on the table*]. Foolish boy! you are not made for a conspirator; you have not learned to hold your tongue. Heroics are out of place in a palace.

CZAR [*Sinks into his chair with his eyes fixed on the* CZAREVITCH]. O God!

CZARE. If I am to die for the people, I am ready; one Nihilist more or less in Russia, what does that matter?

PRINCE PAUL [*Aside*]. A good deal I should say to the one Nihilist.

[23] CZARE. The mighty brotherhood to which I belong has a thousand such as I am, ten thousand better still! [*The* CZAR *starts in his seat.*] The star of freedom has risen already, and far off I hear the mighty wave democracy break on these cursed shores.[23]

PRINCE PAUL [*To* PRINCE PETROVITCH]. In that case you and I had better learn how to swim.

CZARE. Father, Emperor, Imperial Master, I plead not for my own life, but for the lives of my brothers, the people.

PRINCE PAUL [*Bitterly*]. Your brothers, the people, Prince, are not content with their own lives, they always want to take their neighbour's too.

CZAR [*Standing up*]. I am sick of being afraid. I have done with terror now. From this day I proclaim war aginst the people — war to their annihilation. As they have dealt with me, so shall I deal with them. I shall grind them to powder, and strew their dust upon the air. There shall be a spy in every man's house, a traitor on every hearth, a hangman in every village, a gibbet in every square. Plague, leprosy, or fever shall be less deadly than my wrath; I will make every frontier a graveyard, every province a lazar-house, and cure the sick by the sword. I shall have peace in Russia, though it be the peace of the dead. Who said I was a coward? Who said I was afraid? See, thus shall I crush this people beneath my feet! [*Takes up sword of* CZAREVITCH *off table and tramples on it.*]

CZARE. Father, beware, the sword you tread on may turn and wound you. The people suffer long, but vengeance comes at last, vengeance with red hands and bloody purpose.

PRINCE PAUL. Bah! the people are bad shots; they always miss one.

CZARE. There are times when the people are instruments of God.

CZAR. Ay! and when kings are God's scourges for the people. Oh, my own son, in my own house! My own flesh and blood against me! Take him away! Take him away! Bring in my guards. [*Enter the Imperial Guard.* CZAR *points to* CZAREVITCH, *who stands alone at the side of the stage.*] To the blackest prison in Moscow! Let me never see his face again. [CZAREVITCH *is being led out.*] No, no, leave him! I don't trust guards. They are all Nihilists! They would let him escape and he

would kill me, kill me! No, I'll bring him to prison myself, you and I [*To* PRINCE PAUL]. I trust you, you have no mercy. I shall have no mercy. Oh, my own son against me! How hot it is! The air stifles me! I feel as if I were going to faint, as if something were at my throat. Open the windows, I say! Out of my sight! Out of my sight! I can't bear his eyes. Wait, wait for me. [*Throws window open and goes out on balcony.*]

PRINCE PAUL [*Looking at his watch*]. The dinner is sure to be spoiled. How annoying politics are and eldest sons!

VOICE [*Outside, in the street*]. God save the people! [CZAR *is shot, and staggers back into the room.*]

CZARE. [*Breaking from the guards, and rushing over*]. Father!

CZAR. Murderer! Murderer! You did it! Murderer! [*Dies.*]

TABLEAU

END OF ACT II

THIRD ACT

ACT III

Same scene and business as Act I. Man in yellow dress, with drawn sword, at the door.

Password outside. Væ tyrannis.

Answer. Væ victis [*Repeated three times*].

[*Enter* CONSPIRATORS, *who form a semicircle, masked and cloaked.*]

PRESIDENT. What hour is it?

FIRST CONSP. The hour to strike.

PRES. What day?

SECOND CONSP. The day of Marat.[1]

PRES. In what month?

THIRD CONSP. The month of liberty.

PRES. What is our duty?

FOURTH CONSP. To obey.

PRES. Our creed?

FIFTH CONSP. Parbleu, Mons. le President, I never knew you had one.

CONSP. A spy! A spy! Unmask! Unmask! A spy!

PRES. [2] Let the doors be shut. There are others but Nihilists present.[2]

CONSPS. Unmask! Unmask! [3] Kill him! kill him![3]

[*Masked* CONSPIRATOR *unmasks.*] Prince Paul!

VERA. Devil! Who lured you into the lion's den!

CONSPS. Kill him! kill him![4]

PRINCE PAUL. En vérité, Messieurs, you are not over-hospitable in your welcome!

VERA. Welcome! What welcome should we give you but the dagger or the noose?

PRINCE PAUL. I had no idea, really, that the Nihilists

were so exclusive. Let me assure you that if I had not always had an *entrée* to the very best society, and the very worst conspiracies, I could never have been Prime Minister in Russia.

VERA. The tiger cannot change its nature, nor the snake lose its venom; but are you turned a lover of the people?

PRINCE PAUL. Mon Dieu, non, Mademoiselle! I would much sooner talk scandal in a drawing-room than treason in a cellar. Besides, I hate the common mob, who smell of garlic, smoke bad tobacco, get up early, and dine off one dish.

PRES. What have you to gain, then, by a revolution?

PRINCE PAUL. Mon ami, I have nothing left to lose. That scatter-brained boy, the new Czar, has banished me.

VERA. To Siberia?

PRINCE PAUL. No, to Paris. He has confiscated my estates, robbed me of my office and my cook. I have nothing left but my decorations. I am here for revenge.[5]

PRES. Then you have a right to be one of us. [5] We also meet daily for revenge.[5]

PRINCE PAUL. You want money, of course. No one ever joins a conspiracy who has any. Here. [*Throws money on table.*] You have so many spies that I should think you want information. Well, you will find me the best informed man in Russia on the abuses of our Government. I made them nearly all myself.

VERA. President, I don't trust this man. He has done us too much harm in Russia to let him go in safety.

PRINCE PAUL. Believe me, Mademoiselle, you are wrong; I will be a most valuable addition to your circle; as for you, gentlemen, if I had not thought that you would be useful to me I shouldn't have risked my neck among you, or dined an hour earlier than usual so as to be in time.

PRES. Ay, if he had wanted to spy on us, Vera, he wouldn't have come himself.

PRINCE PAUL [*Aside*]. No; I should have sent my best friend.

PRES. Besides, Vera, he is just the man to give us the information we want about some business we have in hand to-night.

VERA. Be it so if you wish it.

PRES. Brothers, is it your will that Prince Paul Maraloffski be admitted, and take the oath of the Nihilist?

CONSPS. It is! it is!

PRES. [*Holding out the dagger and a paper*]. Prince Paul, the dagger or the oath?

PRINCE PAUL. [*Smiles sardonically*] I would sooner annihilate than be annihilated. [*Takes paper.*]

PRES. Remember: [6] Betray us, and as long as the earth holds poison or steel, as long as men can strike or woman betray, you shall not escape vengeance.[6] The Nihilists never forget their friends, or forgive their enemies.

PRINCE PAUL. Really? I did not think you were so civilized.

VERA [*Pacing up and down*]. Why is he not here? He will not keep the crown. I know him well.

PRES. Sign. [PRINCE PAUL *signs.*] You said you thought we had no creed. You were wrong. Read it.

VERA. This is a dangerous thing, President. What can we do with this man?

PRES. We can use him.

VERA. And afterwards?

PRES. [*Shrugging his shoulders*]. Strangle him.

PRINCE PAUL [*Reading*]. "The rights of humanity!" In the old times men carried out their rights for themselves as they lived, but nowadays every baby seems born with a social manifesto in its mouth much bigger than

itself.[7] "Nature is not a temple, but a workshop: we demand the right to labour." Ah, I shall surrender my own rights in that respect.

VERA [*Pacing up and down behind*]. Oh, will he never come? will he never come?

PRINCE PAUL. "The family as subversive of true socialistic and communal unity is to be annihilated." Yes, President, I agree completely with Article 5. A family is a terrible incumbrance, especially when one is not married. [*Three knocks at the door.*]

VERA. Alexis at last!

Password. Væ tyrannis!

Answer. Væ victis!

[*Enter* MICHAEL STROGANOFF.]

PRES.[8] Michael, the regicide! Brothers, let us do honour to a man who has killed a king.

[9] VERA [*Aside*]. Oh, he will come yet.[9]

PRES. Michael, you have saved Russia.

MICH. Ay, Russia was free for a moment [10] when the tyrant fell, but the sun of liberty has set again like that false dawn which cheats our eyes in autumn.

PRES. The dread night of tyranny is not yet past for Russia.

MICH. [*Clutching his knife*].[11] One more blow, and the end is come indeed.

VERA [*Aside*]. One more blow! What does he mean? Oh, impossible! but why is he not with us? Alexis! Alexis! why are you not here?

PRES. But how did you escape, Michael? They said you had been seized.

MICH. I was dressed in the uniform of the Imperial Guard. The Colonel on duty was a brother, and gave me the password. I drove through the troops in safety with it, and, thanks to my good horse, reached the walls before the gates were closed.

PRES. What a chance his coming out on the balcony was!

MICH. A chance? There is no such thing as chance. It was God's finger led him there.

MICH. And where have you been these three days?

MICH. Hiding in the house of the priest Nicholas at the cross-roads.

PRES. Nicholas is an honest man.

MICH. Ay, honest enough for a priest. I am here now for vengeance on a traitor!

VERA [*Aside*]. O God, will he never come? Alexis! why are you not here? You cannot have turned traitor!

MICH. [*Seeing* PRINCE PAUL]. Prince Paul Maraloffski here! By St. George, a lucky capture! This must have been Vera's doing. She is the only one who could have lured that serpent into the trap.

PRES. Prince Paul has just taken the oath.

VERA. Alexis, the Czar, has banished him from Russia.

MICH. Bah! A blind to cheat us. We will keep Prince Paul here, [11] and find some office for him in our reign of terror.[11] He is well accustomed by this time to bloody work.

PRINCE PAUL [*Approaching* MICHAEL]. That was a long shot of yours, mon camarade.

MICH. I have had a good deal of practice shooting, since I have been a boy, off your Highness's wild boars.

PRINCE PAUL. Are my gamekeepers like moles, then, always asleep?

MICH. No, Prince. I am one of them; but, like you, I am fond of robbing what I am put to watch.

PRES. This must be a new atmosphere for you, Prince Paul. We speak the truth to one another here.

PRINCE PAUL. How misleading you must find it. You have an odd medley here, President — a little rococo, I am afraid.

PRES. You recognise a good many friends, I dare say?

PRINCE PAUL. Yes, there is always more brass than brains in an aristocracy.

PRES. But you are here yourself?

PRINCE PAUL. I? As I cannot be Prime Minister, I must be a Nihilist. There is no alternative.

VERA. O God, will he never come? The hand is on the stroke of the hour. Will he never come?

MICH. [*Aside*]. President, you know what we have to do? 'Tis but a sorry hunter who leaves the wolf cub alive to avenge his father. How are we to get at this boy? It must be to-night. To-morrow be will be throwing some sop of reform to the people, and it will be too late for a Republic.

PRINCE PAUL. You are quite right. Good kings are the enemies of Democracy, and when he has begun by banishing me you may be sure he intends to be a patriot.

MICH. I am sick of patriot kings; [12] what Russia needs is a Republic.[12]

PRINCE PAUL. Messieurs, I have brought you two documents which I think will interest you — the proclamation this young Czar intends publishing to-morrow, and a plan of the Winter Palace, where he sleeps to-night. [*Hands paper.*]

VERA. [13] I dare not ask them what they are plotting about.[13] Oh, why is Alexis not here?

PRES. Prince, this is most valuable information. Michael, you were right. If it is not to-night it will be too late. Read that.

MICH. Ah! A loaf of bread flung to a starving nation. [14] A lie to cheat the people. [14] [*Tears it up.*] It must be to-night. I do not believe in him. Would he have kept his crown had he loved the people? But how are we to get at him?

PRINCE PAUL. The key of the private door in the street. [*Hands key.*]

PRES. Prince, we are in your debt.

PRINCE PAUL [*Smiling*]. The normal condition of the Nihilists.

MICH. Ay, but we are paying our debts off with interest now. Two Emperors in one week. That will make the balance straight. We would have thrown in a Prime Minister if you had not come.

PRINCE PAUL. Ah, I am sorry you told me. It robs my visit of all its picturesqueness and adventure. I thought I was perilling my head by coming here, and you tell me I have saved it. One is sure to be disappointed if one tries to get romance out of modern life.

MICH. It is not so romantic a thing to lose one's head, Prince Paul.

PRINCE PAUL. No, but it must often be very dull to keep it. Don't you find that sometimes? [*Clock strikes six.*]

VERA [*Sinking into a seat*]. Oh, it is past the hour! It is past the hour!

MICH. [*To* PRESIDENT]. Remember to-morrow will be too late.

PRES. Brothers, it is full time. Which of us is absent?

CONSPS. Alexis! Alexis!

PRES. Michael, read Rule 7.

MICH. "When any brother shall have disobeyed a summons to be present, the President shall inquire if there is anything alleged against him."

PRES. Is there anything against our brother Alexis?

CONSP. He wears a crown! He wears a crown!

PRES. Michael, read Article 7 of the Code of Revolution.

MICH. "Between the Nihilists and all men who wear crowns above their fellows, there is war to the death."

PRES. Brothers, what say you? Is Alexis, the Czar, guilty or not?

OMNES. He is guilty!

PRES. What shall the penalty be?

OMNES. Death!

PRES. Let the lots be prepared; it shall be to-night.

PRINCE PAUL. Ah, this is really interesting! I was getting afraid conspiracies were as dull as courts are.

PROF. MARFA. My forte is more in writing pamphlets than in taking shots. Still a regicide has always a place in history.

MICH. If your pistol is as harmless as your pen, this young tyrant will have a long life.

PRINCE PAUL. You ought to remember, too, Professor, that if you were seized, as you probably would be, and hung, as you certainly would be, there would be nobody left to read your own articles.

PRES. Brothers, are you ready?

VERA [*Starting up*]. Not yet! Not yet! I have a word to say.

MICH. [*Aside*]. [15] Plague take her! I knew it would come to this.[15]

VERA. This boy has been our brother. Night after night he has perilled his own life to come here. [16] Night after night, when every street was filled with spies, every house with traitors.[16] Delicately nurtured like a king's son, he has dwelt among us.

PRES. Ay! under a false name. [17] He lied to us at the beginning. He lies to us now at the end.[17]

VERA. I swear he is true. There is not a man here who does not owe him his life a thousand times. When the bloodhounds were on us that night, who saved us [18] from arrest, torture, flogging, death,[18] but he ye seek to kill? —

MICH. To kill all tyrants is our mission!

VERA. He is no tyrant. I know him well! He loves the people.

PRES. We know him too; he is a traitor.

VERA. A traitor! Three days ago he could have betrayed every man of you here, [19] and the gibbet would have been your doom.[19] He gave you all your lives once. Give him a little time — a week, a month, a few days; but not now! — O God,[20] not now!

CONSPS. [*Brandishing daggers*]. To-night! to-night! to-night!

VERA. Peace, you gorged adders; peace!

MICH. What, are we not here to annihilate? shall we not keep our oath?

VERA. Your oath! your oath! [21] Greedy that you are of gain, every man's hand lusting for his neighbour's pelf, every heart set on pillage and rapine; [21] who, of ye all, if the crown were set on his head, would give an empire up for the mob to scramble for? The people are not yet fit for a Republic in Russia.

PRES. Every nation is fit for a Republic.

MICH. The man is a tyrant.

VERA. A tyrant! Hath he not dismissed his evil counsellors. That ill-omened raven of his father's life hath had his wings clipped and his claws pared, and comes to us croaking for revenge. Oh, have mercy on him! [22] Give him a week to live!

PRES. Vera pleading for a king!

VERA [*Proudly*]. I plead not for a king, but for a brother.

MICH. For a traitor to his oath, for a coward who should have flung the purple back to the fools that gave it to him. No, Vera, no. The brood of men is not dead yet, nor the dull earth grown sick of child-bearing. No crowned man in Russia shall pollute God's air by living.

PRES. You bade us try you once; we have tried you, and you are found wanting.

MICH. Vera, I am not blind; I know your secret. You love this boy, this young prince with his pretty face, his curled hair, his soft white hands. Fool that you are, dupe of a lying tongue, do you know what he would have done to you, this boy you think loved you? He would have made you his mistress, used your body at his pleasure, thrown you away when he was wearied of you; you, the priestess of liberty, the flame of Revolution, the torch of democracy.

VERA. What he would have done to me matters little. To the people, at least, he will be true. He loves the people — at least, he loves liberty.

PRES. So he would play the citizen-king, would he, while we starve? [23] Would flatter us with sweet speeches, would cheat us with promises like his father, would lie to us as his whole race have lied.[23]

MICH. And you whose very name made every despot tremble for his life, you, Vera Sabouroff, you would betray liberty for a lover and the people for a paramour!

CONSPS. [24] Traitress! Draw the lots; draw the lots![24]

VERA. In thy throat thou liest, Michael! I love him not. He loves me not.

MICH. You love him not? Shall he not die then?

VERA [*With an effort, clenching her hands*]. Ay, it is right that he should die. He hath broken his oath. [25] There should be no crowned man in Europe. Have I not sworn it? To be strong our new Republic should be drunk with the blood of kings. He hath broken his oath. As the father died so let the son die too.[25] Yet not to-night, not to-night. Russia, that hath borne her centuries of wrong, can wait a week for liberty. Give him a week.

PRES. We will have none of you! Begone from us to this boy you love.

MICH. Though I find him in your arms I shall kill him.

CONSPS. To-night! To-night! To-night!

MICH. [*Holding up his hand*]. A moment! I have something to say. [*Approaches* VERA; *speaks very slowly.*] Vera Sabouroff, have you forgotten your brother? [*Pauses to see effect;* VERA *starts.*] Have you forgotten that young face, pale with famine; those young limbs twisted with torture; the iron chains they made him walk in? What week of liberty did they give him? What pity did they show him for a day. [VERA *falls in a chair.*] Oh! you could talk glibly enough then of vengeance, glibly enough of liberty. When you said you would come to Moscow, your old father caught you by the knees and begged you not to leave him childless and alone.[26] I seem to hear his cries still ringing in my ears, but you were as deaf to him as the rocks on the roadside; as chill and cold as the snow on the hill. You left your father that night, and three weeks after he died of a broken heart. You wrote to me to follow you here. I did so; first because I loved you; but you soon cured me of that; whatever gentle feeling, whatever pity, whatever humanity, was in my heart you withered up and destroyed, as the canker worm eats the corn, and the plague kills the child. You bade me cast out love from my breast as a vile thing, you turned my hand to iron and my heart to stone; you told me to live for freedom and for revenge. I have done so; but you, what have you done?

VERA. Let the lots be drawn! [CONSPIRATORS *applaud.*]

PRINCE PAUL [*Aside*]. Ah, the Grand Duke will come to the throne sooner than he expected. He is sure to make a good king under my guidance. He is so cruel to animals, and never keeps his word.

MICH. Now you are yourself at last, Vera.

VERA [*Standing motionless in the middle*]. The lots, I say, the lots! I am no woman now. My blood seems

turned to gall; my heart is as cold as steel is; my hand shall be more deadly. From the desert and the tomb the voice of my prisoned brother cries aloud, and bids me strike one blow for liberty. The lots, I say, the lots!

PRES. Are you ready? Michael, you have the right to draw first; you are a Regicide.

VERA. O God, into my hands! Into my hands! [*They draw the lots from a bowl surmounted by a skull.*]

PRES. Open your lots.

VERA [*Opening her lot*]. The lot is mine! see the bloody sign upon it! Dmitri, my brother, you shall have your revenge now.

PRES. Vera Sabouroff, you are chosen to be a regicide. God has been good to you. The dagger or the poison? [*Offers her dagger and vial.*]

VERA. I can trust my hand better with the dagger; it never fails. [*Takes dagger.*] I shall stab him to the heart, as he has stabbed me. Traitor, to leave us for a ribbon, a gaud, a bauble, to lie to me every day he came here, to forget us in an hour. [27] Michael was right, he loved me not, nor the people either.[27] Methinks that if I was a mother and bore a man-child I would poison my breast to him, lest he might grow to a traitor or to a king. [PRINCE PAUL *whispers to the* PRESIDENT.]

PRES. Ay, Prince Paul, that is the best way. Vera, the Czar [28] sleeps to-night in his own room in the north wing of the palace. Here is the key of the private door in the street. The passwords of the guards will be given to you. His own servants will be drugged. You will find him alone.

VERA. It is well. I shall not fail.

PRES. We will wait outside in the Place St. Isaac, under the window. As the clock strikes twelve from the tower of St. Nicholas you will give us the sign that the dog is dead.

VERA. And what shall the sign be?

PRES. You are to throw us out the bloody dagger.

MICH. Dripping with the traitor's life.

PRES. Else we shall know that you have been seized, and we will burst our way in, drag you from his guards.

MICH. And kill him in the midst of them.

PRES. Michael, you will head us?

MICH. Ay, I shall head you. See that your hand fails not, Vera Sabouroff.

[29] VERA. Fool, is it so hard a thing to kill one's enemy?[29]

PRINCE PAUL [*Aside*]. This is the ninth conspiracy I have been in in Russia. They always end in a "voyage en Siberie" for my friends and a new decoration for myself.

MICH. It is your last conspiracy, Prince.

PRES. At twelve o'clock, the bloody dagger.

VERA. Ay, red with the blood of that false heart. I shall not forget it. [*Standing in the middle of the stage.*] [30] To strangle whatever nature is in me, neither to love nor to be loved, neither to pity nor to be pitied. Ay! it is an oath, an oath. Methinks the spirit of Charlotte Corday has entered my soul now. I shall carve my name on the world, and be ranked among the great heroines, Ay! the spirit of Charlotte Corday beats in each petty vein, and nerves my woman's hand to strike, as I have nerved my woman's heart to hate. Though he laugh in his dreams, I shall not falter. Though he sleep peacefully, I shall not miss my blow.[30] Be glad, my brother, in your stifled cell; be glad and laugh to-night. To-night this new-fledged Czar shall post with bloody feet to Hell, and greet his father there! [31] This Czar! O traitor, liar, false to his oath, false to me! To play the patriot amongst us, and now to wear a crown; to sell us, like Judas, for thirty silver pieces, to betray us with a kiss! [31] [*With more passion.*] O Liberty, O mighty mother of eternal time,

thy robe is purple with the blood of those who have died for thee! Thy throne is the Calvary of the people, thy crown the crown of thorns. O crucified mother, the despot has driven a nail through thy right hand, and the tyrant through thy left! Thy feet are pierced with their iron. When thou wert athirst thou calledst on the priests for water, and they gave thee bitter drink. They thrust a sword into thy side. They mocked thee in thine agony of age on age. [32] Here, on thy altar, O Liberty, do I dedicate myself to thy service; do with me as thou wilt! [32] [*Brandishing dagger.*] The end has come now, and by thy sacred wounds, O crucified mother, O Liberty, I swear that Russia shall be saved!

CURTAIN

End of Act III

FOURTH ACT

ACT IV

SCENE — *Antechamber of the* CZAR'S *private room. Large window at the back, with drawn curtains over it.*

Present — PRINCE PETROVITCH, BARON RAFF, MARQUIS DE POIVRARD, COUNT ROUVALOFF.

PRINCE PETRO. He is beginning well, this young Czar.

BARON RAFF. [*Shrugs his shoulders*]. All young Czars do begin well.

COUNT R. And end badly.

[1] MARQ. DE POIV. Well, I have no right to complain. He has done me one good service, at any rate.

PRINCE PETRO. Cancelled your appointment to Archangel, I suppose?

MARQ. DE POIV. Yes; my head wouldn't have been safe there for an hour.[1]

[*Enter* GENERAL KOTEMKIN.]

BARON RAFF. Ah! General, any more news of our romantic Emperor?

GEN. KOTEMK. You are quite right to call him romantic, Baron; a week ago I found him amusing himself in a garret with a company of strolling players; to-day his whim is all the convicts in Siberia are to be recalled, and political prisoners, as he calls them, amnestied.

PRINCE PETRO. Political prisoners! Why, half of them are no better than common murderers!

COUNT R. And the other half much worse?

BARON RAFF. Oh, you wrong them, surely, Count. Wholesale trade has always been more respectable than retail.

COUNT R. But he is really too romantic. He objected

yesterday to my having the monopoly of the salt tax. He said the people had a right to have cheap salt.

MARQ. DE POIV. Oh, that's nothing; but he actually disapproved of a State banquet every night because there is a famine in the Southern provinces. [*The young* CZAR *enters unobserved, and overhears the rest.*]

PRINCE PETRO. Quelle bétise! The more starvation there is among the people, the better. It teaches them self-denial, an excellent virtue, Baron, an excellent virtue.

BARON RAFF. I have often heard so; I have often heard so.

GEN. KOTEMK. He talked of a Parliament, too, in Russia, and said the people should have deputies to represent them.

BARON RAFF. As if there was not enough brawling in the streets already, but we must give the people a room to do it in. But, Messieurs, the worst is yet to come. He threatens a complete reform in the public service on the ground that the people are too heavily taxed.

MARQ. DE POIV. He can't be serious there. What is the use of the people except [2] to get money out of? But talking of taxes, my dear Baron, you must really let me have forty thousand roubles to-morrow? my wife says she must have a new diamond bracelet.

COUNT R. [*Aside to* BARON RAFF]. Ah, to match the one Prince Paul gave her last week, I suppose.

PRINCE PETRO. I must have sixty thousand roubles at once, Baron. My son is overwhelmed with debts of honour which he can't pay.

BARON RAFF. What an excellent son to imitate his father so carefully!

GEN. KOTEMK. You are always getting money. I never get a single kopeck I have not got a right to. It's unbearable; it's ridiculous! My nephew is going to be married. I must get his dowry for him.

PRINCE PETRO. My dear General, your nephew must be a perfect Turk. He seems to get married three times a week, regularly

GEN. KOTEMK. Well, he wants dowry to console him.

COUNT R. I am sick of town. I want a house in the country.

MARQ. DE POIV. I am sick of the country. I want a house in town.

BARON RAFF. Mes amis, I am extremely sorry for you. It is out of the question.

PRINCE PETRO. But my son, Baron?

GEN. KOTEMK. But my nephew?

MARQ. DE POIV. But my house in town?

COUNT R. But my house in the country?

MARQ. DE POIV. But my wife's diamond bracelet?

BARON RAFF. Gentlemen, impossible! The old *régime* in Russia is dead; the funeral begins to-day.

COUNT R. Then I shall wait for the resurrection.

PRINCE PETRO. Yes, but, *en attendant*, what are we to do?

BARON RAFF. What have we always done in Russia when a Czar suggests reform? — nothing. You forget we are diplomatists. Men of thought should have nothing to do with action. Reforms in Russia are very tragic, but they always end in a farce.

COUNT R. I wish Prince Paul were here. [3] By the bye, I think this boy is rather ungrateful to him. If that clever old Prince had not proclaimed him Emperor at once without giving him time to think about it, he would have given up his crown, I believe, to the first cobbler he met in the street.

PRINCE PETRO. But do you think, Baron, that Prince Paul is really going? [3]

BARON RAFF. He is exiled.

PRINCE PETRO. Yes; but is he going?

BARON RAFF. I am sure of it; at least he told me he had sent two telegrams already to Paris about his dinner.

COUNT R. Ah! that settles the matter.

CZAR [*Coming forward*]. Prince Paul better send a third telegram and order [*Counting them*] six extra places.

BARON RAFF. The devil!

CZAR. No, Baron, the Czar. Traitors! There would be no bad kings in the world if there were no bad ministers like you. It is men such as you who wreck mighty empires on the rock of their own greatness. Our mother, Russia, hath no need of such unnatural sons. You can make no atonement now; it is too late for that. The grave cannot give back your dead, nor the gibbet your martyrs, but I shall be more merciful to you. I give you your lives! That is the curse I would lay on you. But if there is a man of you found in Moscow by to-morrow night your heads will be off your shoulders.

BARON RAFF. You remind us wonderfully, Sire, of your Imperial father.

CZAR. I banish you all from Russia. Your estates are confiscated to the people. You may carry your titles with you. Reforms in Russia, Baron, always end in a farce. You will have a good opportunity, Prince Petrovitch, of practising self-denial, that excellent virtue! that excellent virtue! So, Baron, you think a Parliament in Russia would be merely a place for brawling. Well, I will see that the reports of each session are sent to you regularly.

BARON RAFF. Sire, you are adding another horror to exile.

CZAR. But you will have such time for literature now. You forget you are diplomatists. Men of thought should have nothing to do with action.

PRINCE PETRO. Sire, we did but jest.

CZAR. Then I banish you for you bad jokes. Bon

voyage, Messieurs.[4] If you value your lives you will catch the first train for Paris. [*Exeunt* MINISTERS.] Russia is well rid of such men as these. They are the jackals that follow in the lion's track. [5] They have no courage themselves, except to pillage and rob.[5] But for these men and for Prince Paul my father would have been a good king, would not have died so horribly as he did die. How strange it is, the most real parts of one's life always seem to be a dream! The coucil, the fearful law which was to kill the people, the arrest, the cry in the courtyard, the pistol-shot, my father's bloody hands, and then the crown! One can live for years sometimes, without living at all, and then all life comes crowding into a single hour. I had no time to think. Before my father's hideous shriek of death had died in my ears I found this crown on my head, the purple robe around me, and heard myself called a king. I would have given it all up then; it seemed nothing to me then; but now, can I give it up now? Well, Colonel, well? [*Enter* COLONEL OF THE GUARD.]

COLONEL. What password does your Imperial Majesty desire should be given to-night?

CZAR. Password?

COLONEL. [6] For the cordon of [6] guards, Sire, on night duty around the palace.

CZAR. You can dismiss them. I have no need of them. [*Exit* COLONEL.] [*Goes to the crown lying on the table.*] What subtle potency lies hidden in this gaudy bauble, the crown,[7] that makes one feel like a god when one wears it? To hold in one's hand this little fiery coloured world, to reach out one's arm to earth's uttermost limit, to girdle the seas with one's hosts; this is to wear a crown! to wear a crown! The meanest serf in Russia who is loved is better crowned than I. How love outweighs the balance! How poor appears the widest empire of this golden world when matched with love! Pent up in this palace, with

spies dogging every step, I have heard nothing of her; I have not seen her once since that fearful hour three days ago, when I found myself suddenly the Czar of this wide waste, Russia. Oh, could I see her for a moment; tell her now the secret of my life I have never dared utter before; tell her why I wear this crown, when I have sworn eternal war against all crowned men! There was a meeting to-night. I received my summons by an unknown hand; but how could I go? I who have broken my oath! who have broken my oath!

[*Enter* PAGE.]

PAGE. It is after eleven, Sire. Shall I take the first watch in your room to-night?

CZAR. Why should you watch me, boy? The stars are my best sentinels.

PAGE. It was your Imperial father's wish, Sire, never to be left alone while he slept.

CZAR. My father was troubled with bad dreams. Go, get to your bed, boy; it is nigh on midnight, and these late hours will spoil those red cheeks. [PAGE *tries to kiss his hand.*] Nay, nay; we have played together too often as children for that. Oh, to breathe the same air as her, and not to see her! the light seems to have gone from my life, the sun vanished from my day.

PAGE. Sire, — Alexis, — let me stay with[8] you to-night! There is some danger over you; I feel there is.

CZAR. What should I fear? I have banished all my enemies from Russia. Set the brazier here, by me; it is very cold, and I would sit by it for a time. Go, boy, go; I have much to think about to-night. [*Goes to back of stage, draws aside curtain. View of Moscow by moonlight.*] The snow has fallen heavily since sunset. How white and cold my city looks under this pale moon! And yet what hot and fiery hearts beat in this icy Russia, for all its frost and snow! Oh, to see her for a moment; to tell

her all; to tell her why I am a king! But she does not doubt me; she said she would trust in me. Though I have broken my oath, she will have trust. It is very cold. Where is my cloak? I shall sleep for an hour. Then I have ordered my sledge, and, though I die for it, I shall see Vera to-night. Did I not bid thee go, boy? What! must I play the tyrant so soon? Go, go! I cannot live without seeing her. My horses will be here in an hour; one hour between me and love! How heavy this charcoal fire smells. [*Exit the* PAGE. *Lies down on a couch beside brazier.*]

[*Enter* VERA *in a black cloak.*]

VERA. Asleep! God, thou art good! Who shall deliver him from my hands now? [9] This is he! The democrat who would make himself a king, the republican who hath worn a crown, the traitor who hath lied to us. Michael was right. He loved not the people. He loved me not.[9] [*Bends over him.*] Oh, why should such deadly poison lie in such sweet lips? Was there not gold enough in his hair before, that he should tarnish it with this crown? But my day has come now: the day of the people, of liberty, has come! Your day, my brother, has come! Though I have strangled whatever nature is in me, I did not think it had been so easy to kill. One blow and it is over, and I can wash my hands in water afterwards, I can wash my hands afterwards. Come, I shall save Russia. I have sworn it. [*Raises dagger to strike.*]

CZAR [*Starting up, seizes her by both hands*]. Vera, you here! My dream was no dream at all. Why have you left me three days alone, when I most needed you? O God, you think I am a traitor, a liar, a king? I am, for love of you. Vera, it was for you I broke my oath and wear my father's crown. I would lay at your feet this mighty Russia, which you and I have loved so well; would give you this earth as a footstool! set this crown on

your head. The people will love us. We will rule them by love, as a father rules his children. There shall be liberty in Russia for every man to think as his heart bids him; liberty for men to speak as they think. I have banished the wolves that preyed on us; I have brought back your brother from Siberia; I have opened the blackened jaws of the mine. The courier is already on his way; within a week Dmitri and all those with him will be back in their own land. The people shall be free — are free now — and you and I, Emperor and Empress of this mighty realm, will walk among them openly, in love. When they gave me this crown first, I would have flung it back to them, had it not been for you, Vera. O God! It is men's custom in Russia to bring gifts to those they love. I said, I will bring to the woman I love a people, an empire, a world! Vera, it is for you, for you alone, I kept this crown; for you alone I am a king. Oh, I have loved you better than my oath! Why will you not speak to me? You love me not! You love me not! You have come to warn me of some plot against my life. What is life worth to me without you? [CONSPIRATORS *murmur outside.*]

VERA. Oh, lost! lost! lost!

CZAR. Nay, you are safe here. It wants five hours still of dawn. To-morrow, I will lead you forth to the whole people —

VERA. To-morrow —!

CZAR. Will crown you with my own hands as Empress in that great cathedral which my fathers built.

VERA [*Loosens her hands violently from him, and starts up.*] I am a Nihilist! I cannot wear a crown!

CZAR [*Falls at her feet*]. I am no king now. I am only a boy who has loved you better than his honour, better than his oath. For love of the people I would have been a patriot. For love of you I have been a traitor. Let us

go forth together, we will live amongst the common people. I am no king. I will toil for you like the peasant or the serf. Oh, love me a little too! [CONSPIRATORS *murmur outside.*]

VERA [*Clutching dagger*]. To strangle whatever nature is in me, neither to love nor to be loved, neither to pity nor —— Oh, I am a woman! God help me, I am a woman! O Alexis! I too have broken my oath; I am a traitor. I love. Oh, do not speak, do not speak — [*Kisses his lips*] — the first, the last time. [*He clasps her in his arms; they sit on the couch together.*]

CZAR. I could die now.

VERA. What does death do in thy lips? Thy life, thy love are enemies of death. Speak not of death. Not yet, not yet.

CZAR. I know not why death came into my heart. Perchance the cup of life is filled too full of pleasure to endure. This is our wedding night.

VERA. Our wedding night!

CZAR. And if death came himself, methinks that I could kiss his pallid mouth, and suck sweet poison from it.

VERA. Our wedding night! Nay, nay. Death should not sit at the feast. There is no such thing as death.

CZAR. There shall not be for us. [CONSPIRATORS *murmur outside.*]

VERA. What is that? Did you not hear something?

CZAR. Only your voice, that fowler's note which lures my heart away like a poor bird upon the limed twig.

VERA. Methought that some one laughed.

CZAR. It was but the wind and rain; the night is full of storm. [CONSPIRATORS *murmur outside.*]

VERA. It should be so indeed. Oh, where are your guards? where are your guards?

CZAR. Where should they be but at home? I shall not live pent round by sword and steel. The love of a people is a king's best body-guard.

VERA. The love of a people!

CZAR. Sweet, you are safe here. Nothing can harm you here. O love, I knew you trusted me! You said you would have trust.

VERA. I have had trust. O love, the past seems but some dull grey dream from which our souls have wakened. This is life at last.

CZAR. Ay, life at last.

VERA. Our wedding night! Oh, let me drink my fill of love to-night! Nay, sweet, not yet, not yet. How still it is, and yet methinks the air is full of music. It is some nightingale, who, wearying of the south, has come to sing in this bleak north to lovers such as we. It is the nightingale. Dost thou not hear it?

CZAR. Oh, sweet, mine ears are clogged to all sweet sounds save thine own voice, and mine eyes blinded to all sights but thee, else had I heard that nightingale, and seen the golden-vestured morning sun itself steal from its sombre east before its time for jealousy that thou art twice as fair.

VERA. Yet would that thou hadst heard the nightingale. Methinks that bird will never sing again.

CZAR. It is no nightingale. 'Tis love himself singing for very ecstasy of joy that thou art changed into his votaress. [*Clock begins striking twelve.*] Oh, listen, sweet, it is the lover's hour. Come, let us stand without, and hear the midnight answered from tower to tower over the wide white town. Our wedding night! What is that? What is that?

[*Loud murmurs of* CONSPIRATORS *in the street.*]

VERA [*Breaks from him and rushes across the stage*]. The wedding guests are here already! Ay, you shall have

your sign! [*Stabs herself.*] You shall have your sign! [*Rushes to the window.*]

CZAR [*Intercepts her by rushing between her and window, and snatches dagger out of her hand*]. Vera!

VERA [*Clinging to him*]. Give me back the dagger! Give me back the dagger! There are men in the street who seek your life; Your guards have betrayed you! This bloody dagger is the signal that you are dead. [CONSPIRATORS *begin to shout below in the street.*] Oh, there is not a moment to be lost! Throw it out! Throw it out! Nothing can save me now; this dagger is poisoned! I feel death already in my heart.

CZAR [*Holding dagger out of her reach*]. Death is in my heart too; we shall die together.

VERA. Oh, love! love! love! be merciful to me! The wolves are hot upon you! you must live for liberty, for Russia, for me! Oh, you do not love me! You offered me an empire once! Give me this dagger now! Oh, you are cruel! My life for yours! What does it matter? [*Loud shouts in the street,* "VERA! VERA! *To the rescue! To the rescue!*"]

CZAR. The bitterness of death is past for me.

VERA. Oh, they are breaking in below! See! The bloody man behind you! [CZAR *turns round for an instant.*] Ah! [VERA *snatches dagger and flings it out of window.*]

CONSPS. [*Below*]. Long live the people!

CZAR. What have you done?

VERA. I have saved Russia. [*Dies.*]

TABLEAU

CORRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS

Made by the Author in his original copy

The numbers of the "Notes" correspond with the superior figures in the body of the text

ACT I

Note 1 Changed to 2 in violet pencil.
2 Lines from 2 to 2 scored out.
3 These lines scored out, and "we will have" added.
4 This word underlined.
5 These lines scored out.
6 These lines scored out, "what news to-night?" inserted.
7 Lines scored out.
8 Altered to "He."
9 Lines scored out.
10 Altered to "signal for."
11 Lines scored out.
12 Lines scored out.
13 Altered to "be calm, Michael!"
14 These words underlined.
15 Words underlined.
16 Word underlined.
17 Lines scored out.
18 Words scored out.
19 Lines scored out, "from Berlin" inserted.
20 Words scored through.
21 Altered to "strong."
22 These lines scored through.
23 Scored through.
24 Altered to "martial law scheme."
25 Altered to "To raise the barricades."
26 Crossed out.
27 The word "pause" as a stage direction inserted.
28 Lines crossed out.
29 Scored through.

Note 30 Scored through.
31 Word underlined.
32 Word underlined.
33 Words "Who is there?" inserted.
34 Scored through.
35 Scored through.
36 Scored through.
37 Altered to "He has told us."
38 Word underlined.

ACT II

Note 1 Lines scored through.
2 Altered to "you missed."
3 Altered to "profession."
4 Scored through.
5 Word scored through.
6 Insert "for them to go to."
7 Insert "dining."
8 Altered to "bored to death."
9 Scored through.
10 Word underlined.
11 Altered to "a."
12 Lines scored through.
13 "O God!" scored through.
14 Scored through.
15 Lines scored through.
16 Words scored through.
17 Word underlined.
18 Word underlined.
19 Word underlined.
20 Stage direction "a pause" indicated.
21 Altered to "may."
22 Word "I" underlined.
23 This speech cut out.

ACT III

Note 1 "Marat" underlined.
2 Altered to "VERA. Unmask! a spy!"
3 Scored through.
4 Scored through.
5 Scored through.
6 Lines scored through.

Note 7 Insert "and quite as unintelligible."
8 Alter "PRES." to "VERA."
9 Scored through.
10 These lines struck out.
11 This passage scored through.
12 This is struck out.
13 Scored through.
14 Scored through.
15 This speech cut out.
16 Lines scored through.
17 Lines scored through.
18 Cut out this passage and insert "Alexis" after "but."
19 Lines scored through.
20 Altered to "No! No!"
21 This passage is cut out.
22 Insert "Alexis" in place of "him."
23 Lines scored through.
24 This speech cut out.
25 This passage is scored through.
26 The words "no laugh" are inserted here — possibly as a stage direction.
27 Passage scored through.
28 In place of "the Czar" read "Alexis."
29 Delete this speech.
30 This passage is scored out.
31 This passage is scored out.
32 This passage is scored out.

ACT IV

Note 1 These three speeches are scored through.
2 Insert "for the politician."
3 All these lines are cut out.
4 Alter to "Gentlemen."
5 Cut out this sentence.
6 Words scored through.
7 Delete "the crown."
8 Substitute "stop near" for "stay with."
9 This passage is cut out.

SALOMÉ

SALOMÉ

The Persons of the Play

HEROD ANTIPAS (Tetrarch of Judæa).
JOKANAAN (the Prophet).
THE YOUNG SYRIAN (Captain of the Guard).
TIGELLINUS (a Young Roman).
A CAPPADOCIAN.
A NUBIAN.
FIRST SOLDIER.
SECOND SOLDIER.
THE PAGE OF HERODIAS.
JEWS, NAZARENES, ETC.
A SLAVE.
NAAMAN (the Executioner).
HERODIAS (Wife of the Tetrarch).
SALOMÉ (Daughter of Herodias).
THE SLAVES OF SALOMÉ.

SALOMÉ

SCENE — *A great terrace in the Palace of* HEROD, *set above the banqueting-hall. Some soldiers are leaning over the balcony. To the right there is a gigantic staircase, to the left, at the back, an old cistern surrounded by a wall of green bronze. The moon is shining very brightly.*

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. How beautiful is the Princess Salomé to-night!

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. Look at the moon. How strange the moon seems! She is like a woman rising from a tomb. She is like a dead woman. One might fancy she was looking for dead things.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. She has a strange look. She is like a little princess who wears a yellow veil, and whose feet are of silver. She is like a princess who has little white doves for feet. One might fancy she was dancing.

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. She is like a woman who is dead. She moves very slowly.

[*Noise in the banqueting-hall.*]

FIRST SOLDIER. What an uproar! Who are those wild beasts howling?

SECOND SOLDIER. The Jews. They are always like that. They are disputing about their religion.

FIRST SOLDIER. Why do they dispute about their religion?

SECOND SOLDIER. I cannot tell. They are always doing it. The Pharisees, for instance, say that there are angels, and the Sadducees declare that angels do not exist.

FIRST SOLDIER. I think it is ridiculous to dispute about such things.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. How beautiful is the Princess Salomé to-night!

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. You are always looking at her. You look at her too much. It is dangerous to look at people in such fashion. Something terrible may happen.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. She is very beautiful to-night.

FIRST SOLDIER. The Tetrarch has a sombre aspect.

SECOND SOLDIER. Yes; he has a sombre aspect.

FIRST SOLDIER. He is looking at something.

SECOND SOLDIER. He is looking at some one.

FIRST SOLDIER. At whom is he looking?

SECOND SOLDIER. I cannot tell.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. How pale the Princess is! Never have I seen her so pale. She is like the shadow of a white rose in a mirror of silver.

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. You must not look at her. You look too much at her.

FIRST SOLDIER. Herodias has filled the cup of the Tetrarch.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. Is that the Queen Herodias, she who wears a black mitre sewed with pearls, and whose hair is powdered with blue dust?

FIRST SOLDIER. Yes; that is Herodias, the Tetrarch's wife.

SECOND SOLDIER. The Tetrarch is very fond of wine. He has wine of three sorts. One which is brought from the Island of Samothrace, and is purple like the cloak of Cæsar.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. I have never seen Cæsar.

SECOND SOLDIER. Another that comes from a town called Cyprus, and is as yellow as gold.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. I love gold.

SECOND SOLDIER. And the third is a wine of Sicily. That wine is as red as blood.

THE NUBIAN. The gods of my country are very fond. Twice in the year we sacrifice to them young men and maidens; fifty young men and a hundred maidens. But I am afraid that we never give them quite enough, for they are very harsh to us.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. In my country there are no gods left. The Romans have driven them out. There are some who say that they have hidden themselves in the mountains, but I do not believe it. Three nights I have been on the mountains seeking them everywhere. I did not find them. And at last I called them by their names, and they did not come. I think they are dead.

FIRST SOLDIER. The Jews worship a God that one cannot see.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. I cannot understand that.

FIRST SOLDIER. In fact, they only believe in things that one cannot see.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. That seems to me altogether ridiculous.

THE VOICE OF JOKANAAN. After me shall come another mightier than I. I am not worthy so much as to unloose the latchet of his shoes. When he cometh, the solitary places shall be glad. They shall blossom like the rose. The eyes of the blind shall see the day, and the ears of the deaf shall be opened. The suckling child shall put his hand upon the dragon's lair, he shall lead the lions by their manes.

SECOND SOLDIER. Make him be silent. He is always saying ridiculous things.

FIRST SOLDIER. No, no. He is a holy man. He is very gentle, too. Every day, when I give him to eat he thanks me.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. Who is he?

FIRST SOLDIER. A prophet.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. What is his name?

FIRST SOLDIER. Jokanaan.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. Whence comes he?

FIRST SOLDIER. From the desert where he fed on locusts and wild honey. He was clothed in camel's hair, and round his loins he had a leathern belt. He was very terrible to look upon. A great multitude used to follow him. He even had disciples.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. What is he talking of?

FIRST SOLDIER. We can never tell. Sometimes he says things that affright one, but it is impossible to understand what he says.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. May one see him?

FIRST SOLDIER. No. The Tetrarch has forbidden it.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. The Princess has hidden her face behind her fan! Her little white hands are fluttering like doves that fly to their dove-cots. They are like white butterflies. They are just like white butterflies.

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. What is that to you? Why do you look at her? You must not look at her. . . . Something terrible may happen.

THE CAPPADOCIAN [*Pointing to the cistern*]. What a strange prison!

SECOND SOLDIER. It is an old cistern.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. An old cistern! That must be a poisonous place in which to dwell!

SECOND SOLDIER. Oh no! For instance, the Tetrarch's brother, his elder brother, the first husband of Herodias the Queen, was imprisoned there for twelve years. It did not kill him. At the end of the twelve years he had to be strangled.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. Strangled? Who dared to do that?

SECOND SOLDIER [*Pointing to the Executioner, a huge Negro*]. That man yonder, Naaman.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. He was not afraid?

SECOND SOLDIER. Oh no! The Tetrarch sent him the ring.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. What ring?

SECOND SOLDIER. The death-ring. So he was not afraid.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. Yet it is a terrible thing to strangle a king.

FIRST SOLDIER. Why? Kings have but one neck, like other folk.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. I think it terrible.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. The Princess is getting up! She is leaving the table! She looks very troubled. Ah, she is coming this way. Yes, she is coming towards us. How pale she is! Never have I seen her so pale.

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. I pray you not to look at her.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. She is like a dove that has strayed. . . . She is like a narcissus trembling in the wind. . . . She is like a silver flower.

[*Enter* SALOMÉ.]

SALOMÉ. I will not stay. I cannot stay. Why does the Tetrarch look at me all the while with his mole's eyes under his shaking eyelids? It is strange that the husband of my mother looks at me like that. I know not what it means. Of a truth I know it too well.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. You have left the feast, Princess?

SALOMÉ. How sweet is the air here! I can breathe here! Within there are Jews from Jerusalem who are tearing each other in pieces over their foolish ceremonies, and barbarians who drink and drink, and spill their wine on the pavement, and Greeks from Smyrna with painted eyes and painted cheeks, and frizzed hair curled in columns, and Egyptians silent and subtle, with long nails of gade and russet cloaks, and Romans brutal and coarse, with their uncouth jargon. Ah! how I loathe the Romans!

They are rough and common, and they give themselves the airs of noble lords.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Will you be seated, Princess?

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. Why do you speak to her? Oh! something terrible will happen. Why do you look at her?

SALOMÉ. How good to see the moon! She is like a little piece of money, a little silver flower. She is cold and chaste. I am sure she is a virgin. Yes, she is a virgin. She has never defiled herself. She has never abandoned herself to men, like the other goddesses.

THE VOICE OF JOKANAAN. Behold! the Lord hath come. The son of man is at hand. The centaurs have hidden themselves in the rivers, and the nymphs have left the rivers, and are lying beneath the leaves of the forest.

SALOMÉ. Who was that who cried out?

SECOND SOLDIER. The prophet, Princess.

SALOMÉ. Ah, the prophet! He of whom the Tetrarch is afraid?

SECOND SOLDIER. We know nothing of that, Princess. It was the prophet Jokanaan who cried out.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Is it your pleasure that I bid them bring your litter, Princess? The night is fair in the garden.

SALOMÉ. He says terrible things about my mother, does he not?

SECOND SOLDIER. We never understand what he says, Princess?

SALOMÉ. Yes; he says terrible things about her.

[*Enter a Slave.*]

THE SLAVE. Princess, the Tetrarch prays you to return to the feast.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Pardon me, Princess. but if you return not some misfortune may happen.

SALOMÉ. Is he an old man, this prophet?

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Princess, it were better to return. Suffer me to lead you in.

SALOMÉ. This prophet . . . is he an old man?

FIRST SOLDIER. No, Princess, he is quite young.

SECOND SOLDIER. One cannot be sure. There are those who say he is Elias.

SALOMÉ. Who is Elias?

SECOND SOLDIER. A prophet of this country in bygone days, Princess.

THE SLAVE. What answer may I give the Tetrarch from the Princess?

THE VOICE OF JOKANAAN. Rejoice not, O land of Palestine, because the rod of him who smote thee is broken. For from the seed of the serpent shall come a basilisk, and that which is born of it shall devour the birds.

SALOMÉ. What a strange voice! I would speak with him.

FIRST SOLDIER. I fear it may not be, Princess. The Tetrarch does not suffer any one to speak with him. He has even forbidden the high priest to speak with him.

SALOMÉ. I desire to speak with him.

FIRST SOLDIER. It is impossible, Princess.

SALOMÉ. I will speak with him.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Would it not be better to return to the banquet?

SALOMÉ. Bring forth this prophet. [*Exit the slave.*]

FIRST SOLDIER. We dare not, Princess.

SALOMÉ [*Approaching the cistern and looking down into it*]. How black it is, down there! It must be terrible to be in so black a hole! It is like a tomb. . . . [*To the soldiers.*] Did you not hear me? Bring out the prophet. I would look on him.

SECOND SOLDIER. Princess, I beg you do not require this of us.

SALOMÉ. You are making me wait upon your pleasure.

FIRST SOLDIER. Princess, our lives belong to you, but we cannot do what you have asked of us. And indeed, it is not of us that you should ask this thing.

SALOMÉ [*Looking at the young Syrian*]. Ah!

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. Oh! what is going to happen? I am sure that something terrible will happen.

SALOMÉ [*Going up to the young Syrian*]. Thou wilt do this thing for me, wilt thou not, Narraboth? Thou wilt do this thing for me. I have ever been kind towards thee. Thou wilt do it for me. I would but look at him, this strange prophet. Men have talked so much of him. Often I have heard the Tetrarch talk of him. I think he is afraid of him, the Tetrarch. Art thou, even thou, also afraid of him, Narraboth?

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. I fear him not, Princess; there is no man I fear. But the Tetrarch has formally forbidden that any man should raise the cover of this well.

SALOMÉ. Thou wilt do this thing for me, Narraboth, and to-morrow when I pass in my litter beneath the gateway of the idol-sellers I will let fall for thee a little flower, a little green flower.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Princess, I cannot, I cannot.

SALOMÉ [*Smiling*]. Thou wilt do this thing for me, Narraboth. Thou knowest that thou wilt do this thing for me. And on the morrow when I shall pass in my litter by the bridge of the idol-buyers, I will look at thee through the muslin veils, I will look at thee, Narraboth, it may be I will smile at thee. Look at me, Narraboth, look at me. Ah! thou knowest that thou wilt do what I ask of thee. Thou knowest it. . . . I know that thou wilt do this thing.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN [*Signing to the third soldier*]. Let the prophet come forth. . . . The Princess Salomé desires to see him.

SALOMÉ. Ah!

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. Oh! How strange the moon

looks. Like the hand of a dead woman who is seeking to cover herself with a shroud.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. She has a strange aspect! She is like a little princess, whose eyes are eyes of amber. Through the clouds of muslin she is smiling like a little princess.

[*The prophet comes out of the cistern.* SALOMÉ *looks at him and steps slowly back.*]

JOKANAAN. Where is he whose cup of abominations is now full? Where is he, who in a robe of silver shall one day die in the face of all the people? Bid him come forth, that he may hear the voice of him who hath cried in the waste places and in the houses of kings.

SALOMÉ. Of whom is he speaking?

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. No one can tell, Princess.

JOKANAAN. Where is she who saw the images of men painted on the walls, even the images of the Chaldeans painted with colours, and gave herself up unto the lust of her eyes, and sent ambassadors into the land of Chaldæa .

SALOMÉ. It is of my mother that he is speaking.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Oh, no, Princess.

SALOMÉ. Yes; it is of my mother that he is speaking.

JOKANAAN. Where is she who gave herself unto the Captains of Assyria, who have baldricks on their loins, and crowns of many colours on their heads? Where is she who hath given herself to the young men of the Egyptians, who are clothed in fine linen and hyacinth, whose shields are of gold, whose helmets are of silver, whose bodies are mighty? Go, bid her rise up from the bed of her abominations, from the bed of her incestuousness, that she may hear the words of him who prepareth the way of the Lord, that she may repent her of her iniquities. Though she will not repent, but will stick fast in her abominations; go, bid her come, for the fan of the Lord is in His hand.

SALOMÉ. Ah, but he is terrible, he is terrible!

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Do not stay here, Princess, I beseech you.

SALOMÉ. It is his eyes above all that are terrible. They are like black holes burned by torches in a tapestry of Tyre. They are like the black caverns of Egypt in which the dragons make their lairs. They are like black lakes troubled by fantastic moons. . . . Do you think he will speak again?

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Do not stay here, Princess. I pray you do not stay here.

SALOMÉ. How wasted he is! He is like a thin ivory statue. He is like an image of silver. I am sure he is chaste as the moon is. He is like a moonbeam, like a shaft of silver. I would look closer at him. I must look at him closer.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Princess! Princess!

JOKANAAN. Who is this woman who is looking at me? I will not have her look at me. Wherefore doth she look at me with her golden eyes, under her gilded eyelids. I know not who she is. I do not desire to know who she is. Bid her begone. It is not to her that I would speak.

SALOMÉ. I am Salomé, daughter of Herodias, Princess of Judæa.

JOKANAAN. Back! daughter of Babylon! Come not near the chosen of the Lord. Thy mother hath filled the earth with the wine of her iniquities, and the cry of her sinning hath come up even to the ears of God.

SALOMÉ. Speak again, Jokanaan. Thy voice is as music to mine ear.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Princess! Princess! Princess!

SALOMÉ. Speak again! Speak again, Jokanaan, and tell me what I must do.

JOKANAAN. Daughter of Sodom, come not near me! But cover thy face with a veil, and scatter ashes upon

thine head, and get thee to the desert and seek out the Son of Man.

SALOMÉ. Who is he, the Son of Man? Is he as beautiful as thou art, Jokanaan?

JOKANAAN. Get thee behind me! I hear in the palace the beating of the wings of the angel of death.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Princess, I beseech thee to go within.

JOKANAAN. Angel of the Lord God, what dost thou here with thy sword? Whom seekest thou in this palace? The day of him who shall die in a robe of silver has not yet come.

SALOMÉ. Jokanaan!

JOKANAAN. Who speaketh?

SALOMÉ. I am amorous of thy body, Jokanaan! Thy body is white like the lilies of a field that the mower hath never mowed. Thy body is white like the snows that lie on the mountains of Judæa, and come down into the valleys. The roses in the garden of the Queen of Arabia are not so white as thy body. Neither the roses of the garden of the Queen of Arabia, the garden of spices of the Queen of Arabia, nor the feet of the dawn when they light on the leaves, nor the breast of the moon when she lies on the breast of the sea. . . . There is nothing in the world so white as thy body. Suffer me to touch thy body.

JOKANAAN. Back! daughter of Babylon! By woman came evil into the world. Speak not to me. I will not listen to thee. I listen but to the voice of the Lord God.

SALOMÉ. Thy body is hideous. It is like the body of a leper. It is like a plastered wall where vipers have crawled; like a plastered wall where the scorpions have made their nest. It is like a whitened sepulchre full of loathsome things. It is horrible, thy body is horrible. It is thy hair that I am enamoured of, Jokanaan. Thy

hair is like clusters of grapes, like the clusters of black grapes that hang from the vine-trees of Edom in the land of the Edomites. Thy hair is like the cedars of Lebanon, like the great cedars of Lebanon that give their shade to the lions and to the robbers who would hide them by day. The long black nights, when the moon hides her face, when the stars are afraid, are not so black as thy hair. The silence that dwells in the forest is not so black. There is nothing in the world that is so black as thy hair. . . . Suffer me to touch thy hair.

JOKANAAN. Back, daughter of Sodom! Touch me not. Profane not the temple of the Lord God.

SALOMÉ. Thy hair is horrible. It is covered with mire and dust. It is like a knot of serpents coiled round thy neck. I love not thy hair. . . . It is thy mouth that I desire, Jokanaan. Thy mouth is like a band of scarlet on a tower of ivory. It is like a pomegranate cut in twain with a knife of ivory. The pomegranate-flowers that blossom in the gardens of Tyre, and are redder than roses, are not so red. The red blasts of trumpets that herald the approach of kings, and make afraid the enemy, are not so red. Thy mouth is redder than the feet of the doves who inhabit the temples and are fed by the priests. It is redder than the feet of him who cometh from a forest where he hath slain a lion, and seen gilded tigers. Thy mouth is like a branch of coral that fishers have found in the twilight of the sea, the coral that they keep for the kings! . . . It is like the vermilion that the Moabites find in the mines of Moab, the vermilion that the kings take from them. It is like the bow of the King of the Persians, that is painted with vermilion, and is tipped with coral. There is nothing in the world so red as thy mouth. . . . Suffer me to kiss thy mouth.

JOKANAAN. Never! daughter of Babylon! Daughter of Sodom! Never.

SALOMÉ. I will kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan. I will kiss thy mouth.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Princess, Princess, thou who art like a garden of myrrh, thou who art the dove of all doves, look not at this man, look not at him! Do not speak such words to him. I cannot endure it. . . . Princess, do not speak these things.

SALOMÉ. I will kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Ah! [*He kills himself and falls between* SALOMÉ *and* JOKANAAN.]

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. The young Syrian has slain himself! The young captain has slain himself! He has slain himself who was my friend! I gave him a little box of perfumes and ear-rings wrought in silver, and now he has killed himself! Ah, did he not say that some misfortune would happen? I too said it, and it has come to pass. Well I knew that the moon was seeking a dead thing, but I knew not that it was he whom she sought. Ah! why did I not hide him from the moon? If I had hidden him in a cavern she would not have seen him.

FIRST SOLDIER. Princess, the young captain has just slain himself.

SALOMÉ. Suffer me to kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan.

JOKANAAN. Art thou not afraid, daughter of Herodias? Did I not tell thee that I had heard in the palace the beatings of the wings of the angel of death, and hath he not come, the angel of death?

SALOMÉ. Suffer me to kiss thy mouth.

JOKANAAN. Daughter of adultery, there is but one who can save thee, it is He of whom I spake. Go seek Him. He is in a boat on the sea of Galilee, and He talketh with His disciples. Kneel down on the shore of the sea, and call unto Him by His name. When He cometh to thee (and to all who call on Him He cometh), bow thyself at His feet and ask of Him the remissions of thy sins.

SALOMÉ. Suffer me to kiss thy mouth.

JOKANAAN. Cursed be thou! daughter of an incestuous mother, be thou accursed!

SALOMÉ. I will kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan.

JOKANAAN. I will not look at thee, thou art accursed, Salomé, thou art accursed. [*He goes down into the cistern.*]

SALOMÉ. I will kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan; I will kiss thy mouth.

FIRST SOLDIER. We must bear away the body to another place. The Tetrarch does not care to see dead bodies, save the bodies of those whom he himself has slain.

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. He was my brother, and nearer to me than a brother. I gave him a little box full of perfumes, and a ring of agate that he wore always on his hand. In the evening we were wont to walk by the river, and among the almond trees, and he used to tell me of the things of his country. He spake ever very low. The sound of his voice was like the sound of the flute, of one who playeth upon the flute. Also he had much joy to gaze at himself in the river. I used to reproach him for that.

SECOND SOLDIER. You are right; we must hide the body. The Tetrarch must not see it.

FIRST SOLDIER. The Tetrarch will not come to this place. He never comes on the terrace. He is too much afraid of the prophet.

[*Enter* HEROD, HERODIAS, *and all the Court.*]

HEROD. Where is Salomé? Where is the Princess? Why did she not return to the banquet as I commanded her? Ah! there she is!

HERODIAS. You must not look at her! You are always looking at her!

HEROD. The moon has a strange look to-night. Has she not a strange look? She is like a mad woman who is seeking everywhere for lovers. She is naked too. She

is quite naked. The clouds are seeking to clothe her nakedness, but she will not let them. She shows herself naked in the sky. She reels through the clouds like a drunken woman. . . . I am sure she is looking for lovers. Does she not reel like a drunken woman? She is like a mad woman, is she not?

HERODIAS. No; the moon is like the moon, that is all. Let us go within. . . . We have nothing to do here.

HEROD. I will stay here! Manasseh, lay carpets there. Light torches, bring forth the ivory table, and the tables of jasper. The air here is sweet. I will drink more wine with my guests. We must show all honours to the ambassadors of Cæsar.

HERODIAS. It is not because of them that you remain.

HEROD. Yes; the air is very sweet. Come, Herodias, our guests await us. Ah! I have slipped! I have slipped in blood! It is an ill omen. Wherefore is there blood here? . . . and this body, what does this body here? Think you I am like the King of Egypt, who gives no feast to his guests but that he shows them a corpse? Whose is it? I will not look on it.

FIRST SOLDIER. It is our captain, sire. He is the young Syrian whom you made captain of the guard but three days gone.

HEROD. I issued no order that he should be slain.

SECOND SOLDIER. He slew himself, sire.

HEROD. For what reason? I had made him captain of my guard.

SECOND SOLDIER. We do not know, sire. But with his own hand he slew himself.

HEROD. That seems strange to me. I had thought it was but the Roman philosophers who slew themselves. Is it not true, Tigellinus, that the philosophers at Rome slay themselves?

TIGELLINUS. There be some who slay themselves, sire.

They are the Stoics. The Stoics are people of no cultivation. They are ridiculous people. I myself regard them as being perfectly ridiculous.

HEROD. I also. It is ridiculous to kill oneself.

TIGELLINUS. Everybody at Rome laughs at them. The Emperor has written a satire against them. It is recited everywhere.

HEROD. Ah! he has written a satire against them? Cæsar is wonderful. He can do everything. . . . It is strange that the young Syrian has slain himself. I am sorry he has slain himself. I am very sorry; for he was fair to look upon. He was even very fair. He had very languorous eyes. I remember that I saw that he looked languorously at Salomé. Truly, I thought he looked too much at her.

HERODIAS. There are others who look too much at her.

HEROD. His father was a king. I drove him from his kingdom. And of his mother, who was a queen, you made a slave — Herodias. So he was here as my guest, as it were, and for that reason I made him my captain. I am sorry he is dead. Ho! why have you left the body here? I will not look at it — away with it! [*They take away the body.*] It is cold here. There is a wind blowing. Is there not a wind blowing?

HERODIAS. No; there is no wind.

HEROD. I tell you there is a wind that blows. . . . And I hear in the air something that is like the beating of wings, like the beating of vast wings. Do you not hear it?

HERODIAS. I hear nothing.

HEROD. I hear it no longer. But I heard it. It was the blowing of the wind. It has passed away. But no, I hear it again. Do you not hear it? It is just like the beating of wings.

HERODIAS. I tell you there is nothing. You are ill. Let us go within.

HEROD. I am not ill. It is your daughter who is sick to death. Never have I seen her so pale.

HERODIAS. I have told you not to look at her.

HEROD. Pour me forth wine. [*Wine is brought.*] Salomé, come drink a little wine with me. I have here a wine that is exquisite. Cæsar himself sent it me. Dip into it thy little red lips, that I may drain the cup.

SALOMÉ. I am not thirsty, Tetrarch.

HEROD. You hear how she answers me, this daughter of yours?

HERODIAS. She does right. Why are you always gazing at her?

HEROD. Bring me ripe fruits. [*Fruits are brought.*] Salomé, come and eat fruits with me. I love to see in a fruit the mark of thy little teeth. Bite but a little of this fruit that I may eat what is left.

SALOMÉ. I am not hungry, Tetrarch.

HEROD [*To* HERODIAS]. You see how you have brought up this daughter of yours.

HERODIAS. My daughter and I come of a royal race. As for thee, thy father was a camel driver! He was a thief and a robber to boot!

HEROD. Thou liest!

HERODIAS. Thou knowest well that it is true.

HEROD. Salomé, come and sit next to me. I will give thee the throne of thy mother.

SALOMÉ. I am not tired, Tetrarch.

HERODIAS. You see in what regard she holds you.

HEROD. Bring me — what is it that I desire? I forget. Ah! ah! I remember.

THE VOICE OF JOKANAAN. Behold the time is come! That which I foretold has come to pass. The day that I spoke of is at hand.

HERODIAS. Bid him be silent. I will not listen to his voice. This man is for ever hurling insults against me.

HEROD. He has said nothing against you. Besides, he is a very great prophet.

HERODIAS. I do not believe in prophets. Can a man tell what will come to pass? No man knows it. Also he is for ever insulting me. But I think you are afraid of him. . . . I know well that you are afraid of him.

HEROD. I am not afraid of him. I am afraid of no man.

HERODIAS. I tell you, you are afraid of him. If you are not afraid of him why do you not deliver him to the Jews who for these six months past have been clamouring for him?

A JEW. Truly, my lord, it were better to deliver him into our hands.

HEROD. Enough on this subject. I have already given you my answer. I will not deliver him into your hands. He is a holy man. He is a man who has seen God.

A JEW. That cannot be. There is no man who hath seen God since the prophet Elias. He is the last man who saw God face to face. In these days God doth not show Himself. God hideth Himself. Therefore great evils have come upon the land.

ANOTHER JEW. Verily, no man knoweth if Elias the prophet did indeed see God. Peradventure it was but the shadow of God that he saw.

A THIRD JEW. God is at no time hidden. He showeth Himself at all times and in all places. God is in what is evil even as He is in what is good.

A FOURTH JEW. Thou shouldst not say that. It is a very dangerous doctrine. It is a doctrine that cometh from Alexandria, where men teach the philosophy of the

Greeks. And the Greeks are Gentiles: They are not even circumcised.

A FIFTH JEW. No one can tell how God worketh. His ways are very dark. It may be that the things which we call evil are good, and that the things which we call good are evil. There is no knowledge of any thing. We can but bow our heads to His will, for God is very strong. He breaketh in pieces the strong together with the weak, for He regardeth not any man.

FIRST JEW. Thou speaketh truly. Verily God is terrible; He breaketh in pieces the strong and the weak as a man breaks corn in a mortar. But as for man, he hath never seen God. No man hath seen God since the prophet Elias.

HERODIAS. Make them be silent. They weary me.

HEROD. But I have heard it said that Jokanaan is in very truth your prophet Elias.

THE JEW. That cannot be. It is more than three hundred years since the days of the prophet Elias.

HEROD. There be some who say that this man is Elias the prophet.

A NAZARENE. I am sure that he is Elias the prophet.

THE JEW. Nay, but he is not Elias the prophet.

THE VOICE OF JOKANAAN. Behold the day is at hand, the day of the Lord, and I hear upon the mountains the feet of Him who shall be the Saviour of the world.

HEROD. What does that mean? The Saviour of the world?

TIGELLINUS. It is a title that Cæsar adopts.

HEROD. But Cæsar is not coming into Judæa. Only yesterday I received letters from Rome. They contained nothing concerning this matter. And you, Tigellinus, who were at Rome during the winter, you heard nothing concerning this matter, did you?

TIGELLINUS. Sire, I heard nothing concerning the

matter. I was explaining the title. It is one of Cæsar's titles.

HEROD. But Cæsar cannot come. He is too gouty. They say that his feet are like the feet of an elephant. Also there are reasons of State. He who leaves Rome loses Rome. He will not come. Howbeit, Cæsar is lord, he will come if such be his pleasure. Nevertheless, I think he will not come.

FIRST NAZARENE. It was not concerning Cæsar that the prophet spake these words, sire.

HEROD. How? — it was not concerning Cæsar?

FIRST NAZARENE. No, my lord.

HEROD. — Concerning whom then did he speak?

FIRST NAZARENE. Concerning Messias who has come.

A JEW. Messiah hath not come.

FIRST NAZARENE. He hath come, and everywhere He worketh miracles.

HERODIAS. Ho! ho! miracles! I do not believe in miracles. I have seen too many. [*To the Page.*] My fan.

FIRST NAZARENE. This man worketh true miracles. Thus, at a marriage which took place in a little town of Galilee, a town of some importance, He changed water into wine. Certain persons who were present related it to me. Also He healed two lepers that were seated before the Gate of Capernaum simply by touching them.

SECOND NAZARENE. Nay, it was blind men that He healed at Capernaum.

FIRST NAZARENE. Nay; they were lepers. But He hath healed blind people also, and He was seen on a mountain talking with angels.

A SADDUCEE. Angels do not exist.

A PHARISEE. Angels exist, but I do not believe that this Man has talked with them.

FIRST NAZARENE. He was seen by a great multitude of people talking with angels.

HERODIAS. How these men weary me! They are ridiculous! [*To the Page.*] Well! my fan! [*The Page gives her the fan.*] You have a dreamer's look; you must not dream. It is only sick people who dream. [*She strikes the Page with her fan.*]

SECOND NAZARENE. There is also the miracle of the daughter of Jairus.

FIRST NAZARENE. Yea, that is sure. No man can gainsay it.

HERODIAS. These men are mad. They have looked too long on the moon. Command them to be silent.

HEROD. What is this miracle of the daughter of Jairus?

FIRST NAZARENE. The daughter of Jairus was dead. This Man raised her from the dead.

HEROD. How! He raises people from the dead?

FIRST NAZARENE. Yea, sire, He raiseth the dead.

HEROD. I do not wish Him to do that. I forbid Him to do that. I suffer no man to raise the dead. This Man must be found and told that I forbid Him to raise the dead. Where is this Man at present?

SECOND NAZARENE. He is in every place, my lord, but it is hard to find Him.

FIRST NAZARENE. It is said that He is now in Samaria.

A JEW. It is easy to see that this is not Messias, if He is in Samaria. It is not to the Samaritans that Messias shall come. The Samaritans are accursed. They bring no offerings to the Temple.

SECOND NAZARENE. He left Samaria a few days since. I think that at the present moment He is in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem.

FIRST NAZARENE. No; He is not there. I have just come from Jerusalem. For two months they have had no tidings of Him.

HEROD. No matter! But let them find Him, and tell Him, thus saith Herod the King, "I will not suffer Thee

to raise the dead!" To change water into wine, to heal the lepers and the blind. . . . He may do these things if He will. I say nothing against these things. In truth I hold it a kindly deed to heal a leper. But no man shall raise the dead. It would be terrible if the dead came back.

THE VOICE OF JOKANAAN. Ah! the wanton one! The harlot! Ah! the daughter of Babylon with her golden eyes and her gilded eyelids! Thus saith the Lord God, Let there come up against her a multitude of men. Let the people take stones and stone her. . . .

HERODIAS. Command him to be silent.

THE VOICE OF JOKANAAN. Let the captains of the hosts pierce her with their swords, let them crush her beneath their shields.

HERODIAS. Nay, but it is infamous.

THE VOICE OF JOKANAAN. It is thus that I will wipe out all wickedness from the earth, and that all women shall learn not to imitate her abominations.

HERODIAS. You hear what he says against me? You suffer him to revile her who is your wife?

HEROD. He did not speak your name.

HERODIAS. What does that matter? You know well that it is I whom he seeks to revile. And I am your wife, am I not?

HEROD. Of a truth, dear and noble Herodias, you are my wife, and before that you were the wife of my brother.

HERODIAS. It was thou didst snatch me from his arms.

HEROD. Of a truth I was stronger that he was. . . . But let us not talk of that matter. I do not desire to talk of it. It is the cause of the terrible words that the prophet has spoken. Peradventure on account of it a misfortune will come. Let us not speak of this matter. Noble Herodias, we are not mindful of our guests. Fill thou my cup, my well-beloved. Ho! fill with wine the great

goblets of silver, and the great goblets of glass. I will drink to Cæsar. There are Romans here, we must drink to Cæsar.

ALL. Cæsar! Cæsar!

HEROD. Do you not see your daughter, how pale she is?

HERODIAS. What is that to you if she be pale or not?

HEROD. Never have I seen her so pale.

HERODIAS. You must not look at her.

THE VOICE OF JOKANAAN. In that day the sun shall become black like sackcloth of hair, and the moon shall become like blood, and the stars of the heaven shall fall upon the earth like unripe figs that fall from the fig-tree, and the kings of the earth shall be afraid.

HERODIAS. Ah! Ah! I should like to see that day of which he speaks, when the moon shall become like blood, and when the stars shall fall upon the earth like unripe figs. This prophet talks like a drunken man . . . but I cannot suffer the sound of his voice. I hate his voice. Command him to be silent.

HEROD. I will not. I cannot understand what it is that he saith, but it may be an omen.

HERODIAS. I do not believe in omens. He speaks like a drunken man.

HEROD. It may be he is drunk with the wine of God.

HERODIAS. What wine is that, the wine of God? From what vineyards is it gathered? In what wine-press may one find it?

HEROD [*From this point he looks all the while at* SALOMÉ]. Tigellinus, when you were at Rome of late, did the Emperor speak with you on the subject of . . .?

TIGELLINUS. On what subject, my Lord?

HEROD. On what subject? Ah! I asked you a question, did I not? I have forgotten what I would have asked you.

HERODIAS. You are looking again at my daughter. You must not look at her. I have already said so.

HEROD. You say nothing else.

HERODIAS. I say it again.

HEROD. And that restoration of the Temple about which they have talked so much, will anything be done? They say the veil of the Sanctuary has disappeared, do they not?

HERODIAS. It was thyself didst steal it. Thou speakest at random and without wit. I will not stay here. Let us go within.

HEROD. Dance for me, Salomé.

HERODIAS. I will not have her dance.

SALOMÉ. I have no desire to dance, Tetrarch.

HEROD. Salomé, daughter of Herodias, dance for me.

HERODIAS. Peace! let her alone.

HEROD. I command thee to dance, Salomé.

SALOMÉ. I will not dance, Tetrarch.

HERODIAS [*Laughing*]. You see how she obeys you.

HEROD. What is it to me whether she dance or not? It is naught to me. To-night I am happy, I am exceeding happy. Never have I been so happy.

FIRST SOLDIER. The Tetrarch has a sombre look. Has he not a sombre look?

SECOND SOLDIER. Yes, he has a sombre look.

HEROD. Wherefore should I not be happy? Cæsar, who is lord of the world, Cæsar, who is lord of all things, loves me well. He has just sent me most precious gifts. Also he has promised me to summon to Rome the King of Cappadocia, who is my enemy. It may be that at Rome he will crucify him, for he is able to do all things that he has a mind to. Verily, Cæsar is lord. Therefore I do well to be happy. There is nothing in the world that can mar my happiness.

THE VOICE OF JOKANAAN. He shall be seated on this

throne. He shall be clothed in scarlet and purple. In his hand he shall bear a golden cup full of his blasphemies. And the angel of the Lord shall smite him. He shall be eaten of worms.

HERODIAS. You hear what he says about you. He says that you will be eaten of worms.

HEROD. It is not of me that he speaks. He speaks never against me. It is of the King of Cappadocia that he speaks; the King of Cappadocia who is mine enemy. It is he who shall be eaten of worms. It is not I. Never has he spoken word against me, this prophet, save that I sinned in taking to wife the wife of my brother. It may be he is right. For, of a truth, you are sterile.

HERODIAS. I am sterile, I? You say that, you that are ever looking at my daughter, you that would have her dance for your pleasure? You speak as a fool. I have borne a child. You have gotten no child, no, not on one of your slaves. It is you who are sterile, not I.

HEROD. Peace, woman! I say that you are sterile. You have borne me no child, and the prophet says that our marriage is not a true marriage. He says that it is a marriage of incest, a marriage that will bring evils. . . . I fear he is right; I am sure that he is right. I would be happy at this. Of a truth, I am happy. There is nothing I lack.

HERODIAS. I am glad you are of so fair a humour to-night. It is not your custom. But it is late. Let us go within. Do not forget that we hunt at sunrise. All honours must be shown to Cæsar's ambassadors, must they not?

SECOND SOLDIER. The Tetrarch has a sombre look.

FIRST SOLDIER. Yes, he has a sombre look.

HEROD. Salomé, Salomé, dance for me. I pray thee dance for me. I am sad to-night. Yes; I am passing sad to-night. When I came hither I slipped in blood,

which is an evil omen; also I heard in the air a beating of wings, a beating of giant wings. I cannot tell what they mean. . . . I am sad to-night. Therefore dance for me. Dance for me, Salomé, I beseech thee. If thou dancest for me thou mayest ask of me what thou wilt, and I will give it thee, even unto the half of my kingdom.

SALOMÉ [*Rising*]. Will you indeed give me whatsoever I shall ask of thee, Tetrarch?

HERODIAS. Do not dance, my daughter.

HEROD. Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, even unto the half of my kingdom.

SALOMÉ. You swear it, Tetrarch?

HEROD. I swear it, Salomé.

HERODIAS. Do not dance, my daughter.

SALOMÉ. By what will you swear this thing, Tetrarch?

HEROD. By my life, by my crown, by my gods. Whatsoever thou shalt desire I will give it thee, even to the half of my kingdom, if thou wilt but dance for me. O Salomé, Salomé, dance for me!

SALOMÉ. You have sworn an oath, Tetrarch.

HEROD. I have sworn an oath.

HERODIAS. My daughter, do not dance.

HEROD. Even to the half of my kingdom. Thou wilt be passing fair as a queen, Salomé, if it please thee to ask for the half of my kingdom. Will she not be fair as a queen? Ah! it is cold here! There is an icy wind, and I hear . . . wherefore do I hear in the air this beating of wings? Ah! one might fancy a huge black bird that hovers over the terrace. Why can I not see it, this bird? The beat of its wings is terrible. The breath of the wind of its wings is terrible. It is a chill wind. Nay, but it is not cold, it is hot. I am choking. Pour water on my hands. Give me snow to eat. Loosen my mantle. Quick! quick! loosen my mantle. Nay, but leave it. It is my garland that hurts me, my garland of roses. The

flowers are like fire. They have burned my forehead. [*He tears the wreath from his head and throws it on the table.*] Ah! I can breathe now. How red those petals are! They are like stains of blood on the cloth. That does not matter. It is not wise to find symbols in everything that one sees. It makes life too full of terrors. It were better to say that stains of blood are as lovely as rose petals. It were better far to say that. . . . But we will not speak of this. Now I am happy. I am passing happy. Have I not the right to be happy? Your daughter is going to dance for me. Wilt thou not dance for me, Salomé? Thou hast promised to dance for me.

HERODIAS. I will not have her dance.

SALOMÉ. I will dance for you, Tetrarch.

HEROD. You hear what your daughter says. She is going to dance for me. Thou doest well to dance for me, Salomé. And when thou hast danced for me, forget not to ask of me whatsoever thou hast a mind to ask. Whatsoever thou shalt desire I will give it thee, even to the half of my kingdom. I have sworn it, have I not?

SALOMÉ. Thou hast sworn it, Tetrarch.

HEROD. And I have never broken my word. I am not of those who break their oaths. I know not how to lie. I am the slave of my word, and my word is the word of a king. The King of Cappadocia had ever a lying tongue, but he is no true king. He is a coward. Also he owes me money that he will not repay. He has even insulted my ambassadors. He has spoken words that were wounding. But Cæsar will crucify him when he comes to Rome. I know that Cæsar will crucify him. And if he crucify him not, yet will he die, being eaten of worms. The prophet has prophesied it. Well! wherefore dost thou tarry, Salomé?

SALOMÉ. I am waiting until my slaves bring perfumes to me and the seven veils, and take from off my feet my

sandals. [*Slaves bring perfumes and the seven veils, and take off the sandals of* SALOMÉ.]

HEROD. Ah, thou art to dance with naked feet. 'Tis well! 'Tis well. Thy little feet will be like white doves. They will be like little white flowers that dance upon the trees. . . . No, no, she is going to dance on blood. There is blood spilt on the ground. She must not dance on blood. It were an evil omen.

HERODIAS. What is it to thee if she dance on blood? Thou hast waded deep enough in it. . . .

HEROD. What is it to me? Ah! look at the moon! She has become red. She has become red as blood. Ah! the prophet prophesied truly. He prophesied that the moon would become as blood. Did he not prophesy it? All of ye heard him prophesying it. And now the moon has become as blood. Do ye not see it?

HERODIAS. Oh, yes, I see it well, and the stars are falling like unripe figs, are they not? and the sun is becoming black like sackcloth of hair, and the kings of the earth are afraid. That at least one can see. The prophet is justified of his words in that at least, for truly the kings of the earth are afraid. . . . Let us go within. You are sick. They will say at Rome that you are mad. Let us go within, I tell you.

THE VOICE OF JOKANAAN. Who is this who cometh from Edom, who is this who cometh from Bozra, whose raiment is dyed with purple, who shineth in the beauty of his garments, who walketh mighty in his greatness? Wherefore is thy raiment stained with scarlet?

HERODIAS. Let us go within. The voice of that man maddens me. I will not have my daughter dance while he is continually crying out. I will not have her dance while you look at her in this fashion. In a word, I will not have her dance.

HEROD. Do not rise, my wife, my queen, it will avail

thee nothing. I will not go within till she hath danced. Dance, Salomé, dance for me.

HERODIAS. Do not dance, my daughter.

SALOMÉ. I am ready, Tetrarch.

[SALOMÉ *dances the dance of the seven veils.*]

HEROD. Ah! wonderful! wonderful! You see that she has danced for me, your daughter. Come near, Salomé, come near, that I may give thee thy fee. Ah! I pay a royal price to those who dance for my pleasure. I will pay thee royally. I will give thee whatsoever thy soul desireth. What wouldst thou have? Speak.

SALOMÉ [*Kneeling*]. I would that they presently bring me in a silver charger . . .

HEROD [*Laughing.*] In a silver charger? Surely yes, in a silver charger. She is charming, is she not? What is it thou wouldst have in a silver charger, O sweet and fair Salomé, thou art fairer than all the daughters of Judæa? What wouldst thou have them bring thee in a silver charger? Tell me. Whatsoever it may be, thou shalt receive it. My treasures belong to thee. What is it that thou wouldst have, Salomé?

SALOMÉ [*Rising*]. The head of Jokanaan.

HERODIAS. Ah! that is well said, my daughter.

HEROD. No, no!

HERODIAS. That is well said, my daughter.

HEROD. No, no, Salomé. It is not that thou desirest. Do not listen to thy mother's voice. She is ever giving thee evil counsel. Do not heed her.

SALOMÉ. It is not my mother's voice that I heed. It is for mine own pleasure that I ask the head of Jokanaan in a silver charger. You have sworn an oath, Herod. Forget not that you have sworn an oath.

HEROD. I know it. I have sworn an oath by my gods. I know it well. But I pray thee, Salomé, ask of me something else. Ask of me the half of my kingdom, and I

will give it thee. But ask not of me what thy lips have asked.

SAILOMÉ. I ask of you the head of Jokanaan.

HEROD. No, no, I will not give it thee.

SALOMÉ. You have sworn an oath, Herod.

HERODIAS. Yes, you have sworn an oath. Everybody heard you. You swore it before everybody.

HEROD. Peace, woman! It is not to you I speak.

HERODIAS. My daughter has done well to ask the head of Jokanaan. He has covered me with insults. He has said unspeakable things against me. One can see that she loves her mother well. Do not yield, my daughter. He has sworn an oath, he has sworn an oath.

HEROD. Peace! Speak not to me! . . . Salomé, I pray thee be not stubborn. I have ever been kind toward thee. I have ever loved thee. . . . It may be that I have loved thee too much. Therefore ask not this thing of me. This is a terrible thing, an awful thing to ask of me. Surely, I think thou art jesting. The head of a man that is cut from his body is ill to look upon, is it not? It is not meet that the eyes of a virgin should look upon such a thing. What pleasure couldst thou have in it? There is no pleasure that thou couldst have in it. No, no, it is not that thou desirest. Hearken to me. I have an emerald, a great emerald, thou canst see that which passeth afar off. Cæsar himself carries such an emerald when he goes to the circus. But my emerald is the larger. I know well that it is the larger. It is the largest emerald in the whole world. Thou wilt take that, wilt thou not? Ask it of me and I will give it thee.

SALOMÉ. I demand the head of Jokanaan.

HEROD. Thou art not listening. Thou art not listening. Suffer me to speak, Salomé.

SALOMÉ. The head of Jokanaan.

HEROD. No, no, thou wouldst not have that. Thou

sayest that but to trouble me, because I have looked at thee and ceased not this night. It is true, I have looked at thee and ceased not this night. Thy beauty has troubled me. Thy beauty has grievously troubled me, and I have looked at thee over-much. Nay, but I will look at thee no more. One should not look at anything. Neither at things, nor at people should one look. Only in mirrors is it well to look, for mirrors do but show us masks. Oh! oh! bring wine! I thirst. . . . Salomé, Salomé, let us be as friends. Bethink thee. . . . Ah! what would I say? What was't? Ah! I remember it! . . . Salomé — nay but come nearer to me; I fear thou wilt not hear my words — Salomé, thou knowest my white peacocks, my beautiful white peacocks, that walk in the garden between the myrtles and the tall cypress trees. Their beaks are gilded with gold and the grains that they eat are smeared with gold, and their feet are stained with purple. When they cry out the rain comes, and the moon shows herself in the heavens when they spread their tails. Two by two they walk between the cypress trees and the black myrtles, and each has a slave to tend it. Sometimes they fly across the trees, and anon they crouch in the grass, and round the pools of the water. There are not in all the world birds so wonderful. I know that Cæsar himself has no birds so fair as my birds. I will give thee fifty of my peacocks. They will follow thee whithersoever thou goest, and in the midst of them thou wilt be like unto the moon in the midst of a great white cloud. . . . I will give them to thee all. I have but a hundred, and in the whole world there is no king who has peacocks like unto my peacocks. But I will give them all to thee. Only thou must loose me from my oath, and must not ask of me that which thy lips have asked of me. [*He empties the cup of wine.*]

SALOMÉ. Give me the head of Jokanaan.

HERODIAS. Well said, my daughter! As for you, you are ridiculous with your peacocks.

HEROD. Ah! thou art not listening to me. Be calm. As for me, am I not calm? I am altogether calm. Listen. I have jewels hidden in this place — jewels that thy mother even has never seen; jewels that are marvellous to look at. I have a collar of pearls, set in four rows. They are like unto moons chained with rays of silver. They are even as half a hundred moons caught in a golden net. On the ivory breast of a queen they have rested. Thou shalt be as fair as a queen when thou wearest them. I have amethysts of two kinds, one that is black like wine, and one that is red like wine that one has coloured with water. I have topazes, yellow as are the eyes of tigers, and topazes that are pink as the eyes of a wood-pigeon, and green topazes that are as the eyes of cats. I have opals that burn always, with a flame that is cold as ice, opals that make sad men's minds, and are afraid of the shadows. I have onyxes like the eyeballs of a dead woman. I have moonstones that change when the moon changes, and are wan when they see the sun. I have sapphires big like eggs, and as blue as blue flowers. The sea wanders within them and the moon comes never to trouble the blue of their waves. I have chrysolites and beryls and chrysoprases and rubies. I have sardonyx and hyacinth stones, and stones of chalcedony, and I will give them all unto thee, all, and other things will I add to them. The King of the Indies has but even now sent me four fans fashioned from the feathers of parrots, and the King of Numidia a garment of ostrich feathers. I have a crystal, into which it is not lawful for a woman to look, nor may young men behold it until they have been beaten with rods. In a coffer of nacre I have three wondrous turquoises. He who wears them on his forehead can imagine things which are not, and he who carries them in his hand can turn the

fruitful woman into a woman that is barren. These are great treasures above all price. But this is not all. In an ebony coffer I have two cups, amber, that are like apples of pure gold. If an enemy pour poison into these cups they become like apples of silver. In a coffer incrusted with amber I have sandals incrusted with glass. I have mantles that have been brought from the land of the Seres, and bracelets decked about with carbuncles and with jade that come from the city of Euphrates. . . . What desirest thou more than this, Salomé! Tell me the thing that thou desirest, and I will give it thee. All that thou askest I will give thee, save one thing only. I will give thee all that is mine, save only the head of one man. I will give thee the mantle of the high priest. I will give thee the veil of the sanctuary.

THE JEWS. Oh! oh!

SALOMÉ. Give me the head of Jokanaan.

HEROD [*Sinking back in his seat*]. Let her be given what she asks! Of a truth she is her mother's child! [*The first Soldier approaches.* HERODIAS *draws from the hand of the Tetrarch the ring of death, and gives it to the Soldier, who straightway bears it to the Executioner. The Executioner looks scared.*] Who has taken my ring? There was a ring on my right hand. Who has drunk my wine? There was wine in my cup. It was full of wine. Someone has drunk it! Oh! surely some evil will befall some one. [*The Executioner goes down into the cistern.*] Ah! Wherefore did I give my oath? Hereafter let no king swear an oath. If he keep it not, it is terrible, and if he keep it, it is terrible also.

HERODIAS. My daughter has done well.

HEROD. I am sure that some misfortune will happen.

SALOMÉ [*She leans over the cistern and listens*]. There is no sound. I hear nothing. Why does he not cry out, this man? Ah! if any man sought to kill me, I would cry

out, I would struggle, I would not suffer. . . . Strike, strike, Naaman, strike, I tell you. . . . No, I hear nothing. There is a silence, a terrible silence. Ah! something has fallen upon the ground. I heard something fall. He is afraid, this slave. He is a coward, this slave! Let soldiers be sent. [*She sees the Page of* HERODIAS *and addresses him.*] Come thither, thou wert the friend of him who is dead, wert thou not? Well, I tell thee, there are not dead men enough. Go to the soldiers and bid them go down and bring me the thing I ask, the thing the Tetrarch has promised me, the thing that is mine. [*The Page recoils. She turns to the soldiers.*] Hither, ye soldiers. Get ye down into this cistern and bring me the head of this man. Tetrarch, Tetrarch, command your soldiers that they bring me the head of Jokanaan.

[*A huge black arm, the arm of the Executioner, comes forth from the cistern, bearing on a silver shield the head of* JOKANAAN. SALOMÉ *seizes it.* HEROD *hides his face with his cloak.* HERODIAS *smiles and fans herself. The Nazarenes fall on their knees and begin to pray.*]

Ah! thou wouldst not suffer me to kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan. Well, I will kiss it now. I will bite it with my teeth as one bites a ripe fruit. Yes, I will kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan. I said it; did I not say it? I said it. Ah! I will kiss it now. . . . But, wherefore dost thou not look at me, Jokanaan? Thine eyes that were so terrible, so full of rage and scorn, are shut now. Wherefore are they shut? Open thine eyes! Lift up thine eyelids, Jokanaan! Wherefore dost thou not look at me? Art thou afraid of me, Jokanaan, that thou wilt not look at me? . . . And thy tongue, that was like a red snake darting poison, it moves no more, it speaks no words, Jokanaan, that scarlet viper that spat its venom upon me. It is strange, is it not? How is it that the red viper stirs no longer? . . . Thou wouldst have none of me, Joka-

naan. Thou rejectedst me. Thou didst speak evil words against me. Thou didst bear thyself toward me as to a harlot, as to a woman that is a wanton, to me, Salomé, daughter of Herodias, Princess of Judæa! Well, I still live, but thou art dead, and thy head belongs to me. I can do with it what I will. I can throw it to the dogs and to the birds of the air. That which the dogs leave, the birds of the air shall devour. . . . Ah, Jokanaan, thou wert the man that I loved alone among men. All other men were hateful to me. But thou wert beautiful! Thy body was a column of ivory set upon feet of silver. It was a garden full of doves and lilies of silver. It was a tower of silver decked with shields of ivory. There was nothing in the world so white as thy body. There was nothing in the world so black as thy hair. In the whole world there was nothing so red as thy mouth. Thy voice was a censer that scattered strange perfumes, and when I looked on thee I heard a strange music. Ah! wherefore didst thou not look at me, Jokanaan? With the cloak of thine hands and with the cloak of thy blasphemies thou didst hide thy face. Thou didst put upon thine eyes the covering of him who would see his God. Well, thou hast seen thy God, Jokanaan, but me, me, thou didst never see. If thou hadst seen me thou hadst loved me. I saw thee, and I loved thee. Oh, how I loved thee! I love thee yet, Jokanaan, I love only thee. . . . I am athirst for thy beauty; I am hungry for thy body; and neither wine nor apples can appease my desire. What shall I do now, Jokanaan? Neither the floods nor the great waters can quench my passion. I was a princess, and thou didst scorn me. I was a virgin, and thou didst take my virginity from me. I was chaste, and thou didst fill my veins with fire. . . . Ah! ah! wherefore didst thou not look at me? If thou hadst looked at me thou hadst loved me. Well I know that thou wouldst have

loved me, and the mystery of love is greater than the mystery of death.

HEROD. She is monstrous, thy daughter, I tell thee she is monstrous. In truth, what she has done is a great crime. I am sure that it is. A crime against some unknown God.

HERODIAS. I am well pleased with my daughter. She has done well. And I would stay here now.

HEROD [*Rising*]. Ah! There speaks my brother's wife! Come! I will not stay in this place. Come, I tell thee. Surely some terrible thing will befall. Manasseh, Issadar, Zias, put out the torches. I will not look at things, I will not suffer things to look at me. Put out the torches! Hide the moon! Hide the stars! Let us hide ourselves in our palace, Herodias. I begin to be afraid.

[*The slaves put out the torches. The stars disappear. A great cloud crosses the moon and conceals it completely. The stage becomes quite dark. The Tetrarch begins to climb the staircase.*]

THE VOICE OF SALOMÉ. Ah! I have kissed thy mouth, Jokanaan, I have kissed thy mouth. There was a bitter taste on my lips. Was it the taste of blood? . . . Nay; but perchance it was the taste of love. . . . They say that love hath a bitter taste. . . . But what matter? what matter? I have kissed thy mouth.

HEROD [*Turning round and seeing* SALOMÉ]. Kill that woman!

[*The soldiers rush forward and crush beneath their shields* SALOMÉ, *daughter of* HERODIAS, *Princess of Judæa.*]

CURTAIN

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